DAPHNE

An Avtvmn Pastoral

MARGARET SHERWOOD

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BY

MARGARET SHERWOOD

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CHAPTER

I

"Her Excellency, — will she have the politeness," said Daphne slowly, reading with some difficulty from a tiny Italian-English phrase-book, "the politeness to" — She stopped helpless. Old Giacomo gazed at her with questioning eyes. The girl turned the pages swiftly and chose another phrase.

"I go," she announced, "I go to make a walk."

Light flashed into Giacomo's face.

"*Si, si*, Signorina; yes," yes, he assented with voice and shoulders and a flourish of the spoon he was polishing. "*Capisco;* I understand."

Daphne consulted her dictionary.

"Down there," she said gravely, pointing toward the top of the great hill on whose side the villa stood.

"Certainly," answered Giacomo with a bow, too much pleased by understanding when there was no reason for it to be captious in regard to the girl's speech. "The Signorina *non ha paura*, not 'fraid?"

"I 'm not afraid of anything," was the answer in English. The Italian version of it was a shaking of the head. Then both dictionary and phrase-book were consulted.

"To return," she stated finally, "to return to eat at six hours." Then she looked expectantly about.

"Assunta?" she said inquiringly, with a slight shrug of her shoulders, for other means of expression had failed.

"*Capisco, capisco*," shouted Giacomo in his excitement, trailing on the marble floor the chamois skin with which he had been polishing

the silver, and speaking in what seemed to his listener one word of a thousand syllables.

"The — Signorina — goes — to — walk — upon — the — hills — above — the — villa — because — it — is — a — most — beautiful — day. — She — returns — to — dine — at — six — and — wishes — Assunta — to — have — dinner — prepared. — Perhaps — the — Signorina — would — tell — what — she — would — like — for — her — dinner? — A — roast — chicken, — yes? — A — salad, — yes?"

Daphne looked dubiously at him, though he had stated the case with entire accuracy, and had suggested for her solitary meal what she most liked. There was a slight pucker in her white forehead, and she vouchsafed no answer to what she did not understand.

"*Addio, addio*," she said earnestly.

"*A rivederla!*" answered Giacomo, with a courtly sweep of the chamois skin.

The girl climbed steadily up the moist, steep

path leading to the deep shadow of a group of ilex trees on the hill. At her side a stream of water trickled past drooping maidenhair fern and over immemorial moss. Here and there it fell in little cascades, making a sleepy murmur in the warm air of afternoon.

Halfway up the hill Daphne paused and looked back. Below the yellow walls of the Villa Accolanti, standing in a wide garden with encompassing poplars and cypresses, stretched great grassy slopes and gray-green olive orchards. The water from the stream, gathered in a stone basin at the foot of the hill, flowed in a marble conduit through the open hall. As she looked she was aware of two old brown faces anxiously gazing after her. Giacomo and Assunta were chattering eagerly in the doorway, the black of his butler's dress and the white of his protecting apron making his wife's purple calico skirt and red shoulder shawl look more gay. They caught the last flutter of the

girl's blue linen gown as it disappeared among the ilexes.

"*E molto bella*, very beautiful, the Signorina," remarked Assunta. "What gray eyes she has, and how she walks!"

"But she knows no speech," responded her husband.

"*Ma che!*" shouted Assunta scornfully, "she talks American. You could n't expect them to speak like us over there. They are not Romans in America."

"My brother Giovanni is there," remarked Giacomo. "She could have learned of him."

"She is like the Contessa," said Assunta. "You would know they are sisters, only this one is younger and has something more sweet."

"This one is grave," objected Giacomo as he polished. "She does not smile so much. The Contessa is gay. She laughs and sings and her cheeks grow red when she drinks red wine, and her hair is more yellow."

"She makes it so!" snapped Assunta.

"I have heard they all do in Rome," said Giacomo. "Some day I would like to go to see."

"To go away, to leave this girl here alone with us when she had just arrived!" interrupted Assunta. "I have no patience with the Contessa."

"But was n't his Highness's father sick? And did n't she have to go? Else they would n't get his money, and all would go to the younger brother. You don't understand these things, you women." Giacomo's defense of his lady got into his fingers, and added much to the brightness of the spoons. The two talked together now, as fast as human tongues could go.

Assunta. She could have taken the Signorina.

Giacomo. She could n't. It 's fever.

Assunta. She could have left her maid.

Giacomo. Thank the holy father she did n't!

Assunta. And without a word of language to make herself understood.

Giacomo. She can learn, can't she?

Assunta. And with the cook gone, too! It 's a great task for us.

Giacomo. You 'd better be about it! . . . Going walking alone on the hills! And calling me "Excellency." There 's no telling what these Americans will do.

Assunta. She did n't know any better. When she has been here a week she won't call you "Excellency"! I must make macaroni for dinner.

Giacomo. *Ma che!* Macaroni? Roast chicken and salad.

Assunta. *Niente!* Macaroni!

Giacomo. Roast chicken! You are a pretty one to take the place of the cook!

Assunta. Roast chicken then! But what are you standing here for in the hall polishing spoons? If the Contessa could see you!

Assunta dragged her husband by the hem of his white apron through the great marble-paved dining-room out into the smoke-browned kitchen in the rear.

"Now where's Tommaso, and how am I going to get my chicken?" she demanded. "And why, in the name of all the saints, should an American signorina's illustrious name be Daphne?"

CHAPTER II

An hour later it was four o'clock. High, high up among the sloping hills Daphne sat on a great gray stone. Below her, out beyond olive orchards and lines of cypress, beyond the distant stone pines, stretched the Campagna, rolling in, like the sea that it used to be, wave upon wave of color, green here, but purple in the distance, and changing every moment with the shifting shadows of the floating clouds. Dome and tower there, near the line of shining sea, meant Rome.

Full sense of the enchantment of it all looked out of the girl's face. Wonder sat on her forehead, and on her parted lips. It was a face serious, either with persistent purpose or with some momentary trouble, yet full of an exquisite hunger for life and light and space. Eyes and hair

and curving cheek, — all the girl's sensitive being seemed struggling to accept the gift of beauty before her, almost too great to grasp.

"After this," she said half aloud, her far glance resting on Rome in the hazy distance, "anything is possible."

"I don't seem real," she added, touching her left hand with the forefinger of her right. "It is Italy, *Italy*, and that is Rome. Can all this exist within two weeks of the rush and jangle of Broadway?"

There was no answer, and she half closed her eyes, intoxicated with beauty.

A live thing darted across her foot, and she looked down to catch a glimpse of something like a slender green flame licking its way through the grass.

"Lizards crawling over me unrebuked," she said smiling. "Perhaps the millenium has come."

She picked two grass blades and a single fern.

"They are n't real, you know," she said, addressing herself. "This is all too good to be true. It will fold up in a minute and move away to make ready for the next act, and that will be full of tragedy, with an ugly background."

The heights still invited. She rose, and wandered on and up. Her step had the quick movement of a dweller in cities, not the slow pace of those who linger along country roads, keeping step with nature. In the cut and fashion of her gown was evinced sophistication, and a high seriousness, possibly not her own.

She watched the deep imprint that her footsteps made in the soft grass.

"I 'm half afraid to step on the earth here," she murmured to herself. "It seems to be quivering with old life."

The sun hung lower in the west. Of its level golden beams were born a thousand shades of color on the heights and in the hollows

of the hills. Over all the great Campagna blue, yellow, and purple blended in an autumn haze.

"Oh!" cried the girl, throwing out her arms to take in the new sense of life that came flooding in upon her. "I cannot take it in. It is too great."

As she climbed, a strength springing from sheer delight in the wide beauty before her came into her face.

"It was selfish, and I am going to take it back. To-night I will write and say so. I could face anything now."

This hill, and then the side of that; one more gate, then Daphne turned for another look at Rome and the sea. Rome and the sea were gone. Here was a great olive orchard, there a pasture touching the sky, but where was anything belonging to her? Somewhere on the hills a lamb was bleating, and near the crickets chirped. Yes, it was safe, perfectly safe, yet

the blue gown moved where the heart thumped beneath it.

A whistle came floating down the valley to her. It was merry and quick, but it struck terror to the girl's breast. That meant a man. She stood and watched, with terrified gray eyes, and presently she saw him: he was crashing through a heavy undergrowth of bush and fern not far away. Daphne gathered her skirts in one hand and fled. She ran as only an athletic girl can run, swiftly, gracefully. Her skirt fluttered behind her; her soft dark hair fell and floated on the wind.

The whistle did not cease, though the man was motionless now. It changed from its melody of sheer joy to wonder, amazement, suspense. It took on soothing tones; it begged, it wheedled. So a mother would whistle, if mothers whistled, over the cradle of a crying child, but the girl did not stop. She was running up a hill, and at the top she stood, outlined

in blue, against a bluer sky. A moment later she was gone.

Half an hour passed. Cautiously above the top of the hill appeared a girl's head. She saw what she was looking for: the dreaded man was sitting on the stump of a felled birch tree, gazing down the valley, his cheeks resting on his hands. Daphne, stealing behind a giant ilex, studied him. He wore something that looked like a golf suit of brownish shade; a soft felt hat drooped over his face. The girl peered out from her hiding place cautiously, holding her skirts together to make herself slim and small. It was a choice of evils. On this side of the hill was a man; on that, the whole wide world, pathless. She was hopelessly lost.

"No bad man could whistle like that," thought Daphne, caressingly touching with her cheek the tree that protected her.

Once she ventured from her refuge, then swiftly retreated. Courage returning, she stepped

out on tiptoe and crept softly toward the intruder. She was rehearsing the Italian phrases she meant to use.

"Where is Rome?" she asked pleadingly, in the Roman tongue.

The stranger rose, with no sign of being startled, and removed his hat. Then Daphne sighed a great sigh of relief, feeling that she was safe.

"Rome," he answered, in a voice both strong and sweet, "Rome has perished, and Athens too."

"Oh" — said the girl. "You speak English. If you are not a stranger here, perhaps you can tell me where the Villa Accolanti is."

"I can," he replied, preparing to lead the way.

Daphne looked at him now. He was different from any person she had ever seen. Face and head belonged to some antique type of

virile beauty; eyes, hair, and skin seemed all of one golden brown. He walked as if his very steps were joyous, and his whole personality seemed to radiate an atmosphere of firm content. The girl's face was puzzled as she studied him. This look of simple happiness was not familiar in New York.

They strode on side by side, over the slopes where the girl had lost her way. Every moment added to her sense of trust.

"I am afraid I startled you," she said, "coming up so softly."

"No," he answered smiling. "I knew that you were behind the ilex."

"You could n't see!"

"I have ways of knowing."

He helped her courteously over the one stone wall they had to climb, but, though she knew that he was watching her, he made no attempt to talk. At last they reached the ilex grove above the villa, and Daphne recognized home.

"I am grateful to you," she said, wondering at this unwonted sense of being embarrassed. "Perhaps, if you will come some day to the villa for my sister to thank you" — The sentence broke off. "I am Daphne Willis," she said abruptly, and waited.

"And I am Apollo," said the stranger gravely.

"Apollo — what?" asked the girl. Did they use the old names over here?

"Phœbus Apollo," he answered, unsmiling. "Is America so modern that you do not know the older gods?"

"Why do you call me an American?"

A smile flickered across Apollo's lips.

"A certain insight goes with being a god."

Daphne started back and looked at him, but the puzzled scrutiny did not deepen the color of his brown cheek. Suddenly she was aware that the sunlight had faded, leaving shadow under the ilexes and about the fountain on the hill.

"I must say good-night," she said, turning to descend.

He stood watching every motion that she made until she disappeared within the yellow walls of the villa.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH the great open windows of the room night with all her stars was shining. Daphne sat by a carved table in the salon, the clear light of a four-flamed Roman lamp falling on her hair and hands. She was writing a letter, and, judging by her expression, letter writing was a matter of life and death.

"I am afraid that I was brutal," the wet ink ran. "Every day on the sea told me that. I was cowardly, too."

She stopped to listen to the silence, broken only by the murmur of insects calling to each other in the dark. Suddenly she laughed aloud.

"I ought never to have gone so far away," she remarked to the night. "What would Aunt Alice say? Anyway he is a gentleman, even if he is a god!"

"For I thought only of myself," the pen continued, "and ignored the obligations I had accepted. It is for you to choose whether you wish the words of that afternoon unsaid."

The letter signed and sealed, she rose with a great sigh of relief, and walked out upon the balcony. Overhead was the deep blue sky of a Roman night, broken by the splendor of the stars. She leaned over the stone railing of the balcony, feeling beneath her, beyond the shadow of the cypress trees, the distance and darkness of the Campagna. There was a murmur of water from the fountain in the garden, and from the cascades on the hill.

"If he were Apollo," she announced to the listening stars, "it would not be a bit more wonderful than the rest of it. This is just a different world, that is all, and who knows whom I shall meet next? Maybe, if I haunt the hills, Diana will come and invite me to go a-hunting.

Perhaps if Anna had stayed at home this world would seem nearer."

She came back into the salon, but before she knew it, her feet were moving to a half-remembered measure, and she found herself dancing about the great room in the dim light, the cream-colored draperies of her dinner gown moving rhythmically after her. Suddenly she stopped short, realizing that her feet were keeping pace with the whistling of this afternoon, the very notes that had terrified her while the stranger was unseen. She turned her attention to a piece of tapestry on the wall, tracing the faded pattern with slim fingers. For the twentieth time her eyes wandered to the mosaic floor, to the splendid, tarnished mirrors on the walls, to the carved chairs and table legs, wrought into cunning patterns of leaf and stem.

"Oh, it is all perfect! and I 've got it all to myself!" she exclaimed.

Then she seated herself at the table again and began another letter.

PADRE MIO, — It is an enchanted country! You never saw such beauty of sky and grass and trees. These cypresses and poplars seem to have been standing against the blue sky from all eternity; time is annihilated, and the gods of Greece and Rome are wandering about the hills.

Anna has gone away. Her father-in-law is very ill, and naturally Count Accolanti is gone too. Even the cook has departed, because of a family crisis of his own. I am here with the butler and his wife to take care of me, and I am perfectly safe. Don't be alarmed, and don't tell Aunt Alice that the elaborate new gowns will have no spectators save two Roman peasants and possibly a few sheep. Anna wanted to send me an English maid from Rome, but I begged with tears, and she let me off. Assunta

is all I need. She and Giacomo are the real thing, peasants, and absolutely unspoiled. They have never been five miles away from the estate, and I know they have all kinds of superstitions and beliefs that go with the soil. I shall find them out when I can understand. At present we converse with eyes and fingers, for our six weeks' study of Italian has not brought me knowledge enough to order my dinner.

Padre carissimo, I 've written to Eustace to take it all back. I am afraid you won't like it, for you seemed pleased when it was broken off, but I was unkind and I am sorry, and I want to make amends. You really ought n't to disapprove of a man, you know, just because he wants altar candles and intones the service. And I think his single-minded devotion is beautiful. You do not know what a refuge it has been to me through all Aunt Alice's receptions and teas.

Do leave New York, and come and live with me near ancient Rome. We can easily slip back two thousand years.

I am your spoiled daughter,

DAPHNE.

There was a knock at the door.

"Avanti," called the girl.

Assunta entered, with a saffron-colored night-cap on. In her hand she held Giacomo's great brass watch, and she pointed in silence to the face, which said twelve o'clock. She put watch and candle on the table, marched to the windows, and closed and bolted them all.

"The candles are lighted in the Signorina's bedroom," she remarked.

"Thank you," said Daphne, who did not understand a word.

"The bed is prepared, and the night things are put out."

"Yes?" answered Daphne, smiling.

"The hot water will be at the door at eight in the morning."

"So many thanks!" murmured Daphne, not knowing what favor was bestowed, but knowing that if it came from Assunta it was good.

"Good-night, Signorina."

The girl's face lighted. She understood that.

"Good-night," she answered, in the Roman tongue.

Assunta muttered to herself as she lighted her way with her candle down the long hall.

"*Molto intelligente, la Signorina!* Only here three days, and already understands all."

"You don't need speech here," said Daphne, pulling aside the curtains of her tapestried bed a little later. "The Italians can infer all you mean from a single smile."

Down the road a peasant was merrily beating his donkey to the measure of the tune on his lips. Listening, and turning over many ques-

tions in her mind, Daphne fell asleep. A flood of sunshine awakened her in the morning, and she realized that Assunta was drawing the window curtains.

"Assunta," asked the girl, sitting up in bed and rubbing her eyes, "are there many Americans here?"

"*Si*," answered Assunta, "very many."

"And many English?"

"Too many," said Assunta.

"Young ones?" asked the girl.

Assunta shrugged her shoulders.

"Young men?" inquired Daphne.

The peasant woman looked sharply at her, then smiled.

"I saw one man yesterday," said Daphne, her forehead puckered painfully in what Assunta mistook for a look of fear. Her carefully prepared phrases could get no nearer the problem she wished solved.

"*Ma che! agnellina mia*, my little lamb!"

cried the peasant woman, grasping Daphne's hand in order to kiss her fingers, "you are safe, safe with us. No Americans nor English shall dare to look at the Signorina in the presence of Giacomo and me."

CHAPTER IV

It was not a high wall, that is, not very high. Many a time in the country Daphne had climbed more formidable ones, and there was no reason why she should not try this. No one was in sight except a shepherd, watching a great flock of sheep. There was a forgotten rose garden over in that field; had Cæsar planted it, or Tiberius, centuries ago? Certainly no one had tended it for a thousand years or two, and the late pink roses grew unchecked. Daphne slowly worked her way to the top of the wall; this close masonry made the proceeding more difficult than it usually was at home. She stood for a moment on the summit, glorying in the widened view, then sprang, with the lightness of a kitten, to the other side. There was a skurry of frightened sheep, and then a silence.

She knew that she was sitting on the grass, and that her left wrist pained. Some one was coming toward her.

"Are you hurt?" asked Apollo anxiously.

"Not at all," she answered, continuing to sit on the grass.

"If you were hurt, where would it be?"

"In my wrist," said the girl, with a little groan.

The questioner kneeled beside her, and Daphne gave a start of surprise that was touched with fear.

"It is n't you?" she stammered. "You are n't the shepherd?"

A sheepskin coat disguised him. The rough hat was of soft drooping felt, like that of any shepherd watching on the hills, and in his hand he held a crook. An anxious mother-sheep was sniffing eagerly at his pockets, remembering gifts of salt.

"Apollo was a shepherd," said Daphne

slowly, with wonder in her face. "He kept the flocks of King Admetus."

"You seem to be well read in the classical dictionary," remarked the stranger, with twinkling eyes. "You have them in America then?"

He was examining her wrist with practiced fingers, touching it firmly here and there.

"We have everything in America," said the girl, eyeing him dubiously.

"But no gods except money, I have heard."

"Yes, gods, and impostors too," she answered significantly.

"So I have heard," said Apollo, with composure.

The maddening thing was that she could not look away from him — some radiance of life in his face compelled her eyes. He had thrown his hat upon the grass, and the girl could see strength and sweetness and repose in every line of forehead, lip, and chin. There was pride

there, too, and with it a slight leaning forward of the head.

"I presume that comes from listening to beseeching prayers," she was thinking to herself.

"Ow!" she remarked suddenly.

"That is the place, is it?"

He drew from one of the pockets of the grotesque coat a piece of sheepskin, which he proceeded to cut into two strips with his knife.

"It seems to be a very slight sprain," remarked Apollo. "I must bandage it. Have you any pins about you?"

"Can the gods lack pins?" asked the girl, smiling. She searched, and found two in her belt, and handed them to him.

"The gods do not explain themselves," he answered, binding the sheepskin tightly about her wrist.

"So I observe," she remarked dryly.

"Is that right?" he asked. "Now, when you reach home, you must remove the bandage

and hold your hand and wrist first in very hot water, then in cold. Is there some one who can put the bandage back as I have it? See, it simply goes about the wrist, and is rather tight. You must pardon my taking possession of the case, but no one else was near. Apollo has always been something of a physician, you know."

"You apparently used the same classical dictionary that I did," retorted Daphne. "I remember the statement there."

Then she became uncomfortable, and wished her words unsaid, for awe had come upon her. After all, nothing could be more unreal than she was to herself in these days of wonder. Her mind was full of dreams as they sat and watched white clouds drifting over the deep blue of the sky. Near them the sheep were cropping grass, and all the rest was silence.

"You look anxious," said the physician. "Is it the wrist?"

"No," answered the girl, facing him bravely, under the momentary inspiration of a wave of common sense, "I am wondering why you make this ridiculous assumption about yourself. Tell me who you really are."

If he had defended himself she would have argued, but he was silent and she half believed.

"But you look like a mortal," she protested, answering her own thoughts. "And you wear conventional clothing. I don't mean this sheepskin, but the other day."

"It is a realistic age," he answered, smiling. "People no longer believe what they do not see. We are forced to adopt modern methods and modern costume to show that we exist."

"You do not look like the statue of Apollo," ventured Daphne.

"Did people ever dare tell the truth about the gods? Never! They made up a notion of what a divine nose should be, and bestowed it upon all the gods impartially. So with the

forehead, so with the hair. I assure you, Miss Willis, we are much more individual than Greek art would lead you to expect."

"Do you mind just telling me why you are keeping sheep now?"

"I will, if you will promise not to consider a question of mine impertinent."

"What is the question?"

"I only wished to know why an American young lady should bear a Greek name? It is a beautiful name, and one that is a favorite of mine, as you may know."

"I did n't know," said Daphne. "It was given me by my father. He was born in America, but he had a Greek soul. He has always longed to live in Greece, but he has to go on preaching, preaching, for he is a rector, you know, in a little church in New York, that is n't very rich, though it is very old. All his life he has been hungry for the beauty and the greatness of the world over here."

"That accounts for your expression," observed Apollo.

"What expression?"

"That is n't the question I promised to answer. If you will take a few steps out of your way, I can satisfy you in regard to the first one you asked."

He rose, and the white shepherd dog sprang ahead, barking joyously. The sheep looked up and nibbled in anxious haste, fearing that any other bit of pasture might be less juicy than this. Daphne followed the shepherd god to a little clump of oak trees, where she saw a small, rough gray tent, perhaps four feet in height. Under it, on brown blankets, lay a bearded man, whose eyes lighted at Apollo's approach. A blue bowl with a silver spoon in it stood on the ground near his head, and a small heap of charred sticks with an overhanging kettle showed that cooking had been done there.

"The shepherd has a touch of fever," ex-

plained the guide. "Meanwhile, somebody must take care of the sheep. I am glad to get back my two occupations as shepherd and physician at the same time."

The dog and his master accompanied her part way down the hill, and the girl was silent, for her mind was busy, revolving many thoughts. At the top of the last height above the villa she stopped and looked at her companion. The sun was setting, and a golden haze filled the air. It ringed with light the figure before her, standing there, the face, with its beauty of color, and its almost insolent joyousness, rising above the rough sheepskin coat.

"*Who* are you?" she gasped, terrified. "Who are you, really?" The confused splendor dazzled her eyes, and she turned and ran swiftly down the hill.

CHAPTER V

"A MAN is ill," observed Daphne, in the Roman tongue.

"What?" demanded Giacomo.

"A man is ill," repeated Daphne firmly. She had written it out, and she knew that it was right.

"Her mind wanders," Giacomo hinted to his wife.

"No, no, no! It's the Signorina herself," cried Assunta, whose wits were quicker than her husband's. "She is saying that she is ill. What is it, Signorina mia? Is it your head, or your back, or your stomach? Are you cold? Have you fever?"

"*Si*," answered Daphne calmly. The answer that usually quieted Assunta failed now. Then she tried the smile. That also failed.

"Tell me," pleaded Assunta, speaking twice as fast as usual, in order to move the Signorina's wits to quicker understanding. "If the Signorina is ill the Contessa will blame me. It is measles perhaps; Sor Tessa's children have it in the village." She felt of the girl's forehead and pulse, and stood more puzzled than before.

"The Signorina exaggerates, perhaps?" she remarked in question.

"Thank you!" said Daphne beseechingly. That was positively her last shot, and if it missed its aim she knew not what to do. She saw that the two brown faces before her were full of apprehension, and she came back to her original proposition.

"A man is ill."

The faces were blank. Daphne hastily consulted her phrase-book.

"I wish food," she remarked glibly. "I wish soup, and fish, and red wine and white, and everything included, *tutto compreso*."

The brown eyes lighted; these were more familiar terms.

"Now?" cried Assunta and Giacomo in one breath, "at ten o'clock in the morning?"

"*Si*," answered Daphne firmly, "please, thank you." And she disappeared.

An hour later they summoned her, and looked at her in bewilderment when she entered the dining-room with her hat on. Giacomo stood ready for service, and the Signorina's soup was waiting on the table.

The girl laughed when she saw it.

"*Per me?* No," she said, touching her dress with her finger; "for him, up there," and she pointed upward.

Giacomo shook his head and groaned, for his understanding was exhausted.

"I go to carry food to the man who is ill," recited Daphne, her foot tapping the floor in impatience. She thrust her phrase-book out toward Giacomo, but he shook his head again,

being one whose knowledge was superior to the mere accomplishment of reading.

Daphne's short skirt and red felt hat disappeared in the kitchen. Presently she returned with Assunta and a basket. The two understood her immediate purpose now, however bewildering the ultimate. They packed the basket with a right good will: red wine in a transparent flask, yellow soup in a shallow pitcher, bread, crisp lettuce, and thin slices of beef. Then Daphne gave the basket to Giacomo and beckoned him to come after her.

He climbed behind his lady up the narrow path by the waterfall, through damp grass and trickling fern, then up the great green slope toward the clump of oak trees. By the low gray tent they halted, and Giacomo's expression changed. He had not understood the Signorina, he said, hastily, and he begged the Signorina's pardon. She was good, she was gracious.

"Speak to him," said Daphne impatiently; "go in, give him food."

He lifted the loose covering that served as the side of a tent, and found the sick man. Giacomo chattered, his brown fingers moving swiftly by way of punctuation. The sick man chattered, too, his fingers moving more slowly in their weakness. Giacomo seemed excited by what he heard, and Daphne, watching from a little distance, wondered if fever must not increase under the influence of tongues that wagged so fast. She strolled away, picking tiny, pink-tipped daisies and blue succory blossoms growing in the moist green grass. From high on a distant hillside, among his nibbling sheep, the shepherd watched.

Giacomo presently stopped talking and fed the invalid the soup and part of the wine he had brought. He knew too much, as a wise Italian, to give a sick man bread and beef. Then he made promises of blankets, and of

more soup to-morrow, tucked the invalid up again, and prepared to go home. On the way down the hill he was explosive in his excitement; surely the Signorina must understand such vehement words.

"The sheep are Count Gianelli's sheep," he shouted. "I knew the sheep before, and there is n't a finer flock on the hills. This man is from Ortalo, a day's journey. The Signorina understands?"

She smiled, the reassuring smile that covers ignorance. Then she came nearer, and bent her tall head to listen.

"His name is Antoli," said Giacomo, speaking more distinctly. "Four days ago he fell ill with fever and with chills. He lay on the ground among the sheep, for he had only his blanket that the shepherds use at night. The sheep nibbled close to him, and touched his face with their tongues, and bit off hairs from his head as they cropped the grass, but they did

not care. Sheep never do! Ah, how a dog cares! The Signorina wishes to hear the rest?"

Daphne nodded eagerly, for she had actually understood several sentences.

"The second day he felt a warm tongue licking his face, and there were paws on his breast as he waked from sleep. It was a white dog. He opened his eyes, and there before him was a Signorino, young, beautiful as a god, in a suit of brown. Since then Antoli has wanted nothing, food, nor warm covering, nor medicine, nor kind words. The Signorino wears his sheepskin coat and tends his sheep!"

Giacomo's voice was triumphant with delight as he pointed toward the distant flock with the motionless attendant. The girl's face shone, half in pleasure, half in fear. "Beautiful as a god" was more like the Italian she had read in her father's study in New York than were the phrases Giacomo and Assunta employed for every day. She had comprehended all of

her companion's excitement, and many of his words, for much of the story was already hers.

"Giacomo," she said, speaking slowly, "are the gods here yet?"

The old peasant looked at her with cunning eyes, and made with his fingers the sign of the horn that wards off evil.

"*Chi lo sa?* Who knows, Signorina?" he said, half whispering. "There are stories — I have heard — the Signorina sees these ilex trees? Over yonder was a great one in my father's day, and the old Count Accolanti would have it cut. He came to watch it as it fell, and the tree tumbled the wrong way and struck him so that he half lost his wits. There are who say that the tree god was angry. And I have heard about the streams, too, Signorina; when they are turned out of their course, they overflow and do damage, and surely there used to be river gods. I do not know; I cannot tell. The priest says they are all gone since the com-

ing of our Lord, but I would n't, not for all the gold in Rome, I would n't see this stream of the waterfalls turned away from flowing down the hill and through the house. What there is in it I do not know, but in some way it is alive."

"Thank you!" said Daphne. The look on her face pleased the old man.

"I think I prefer her to the Contessa after all," said Giacomo that afternoon to Assunta as he was beating the salad dressing for dinner. "She is *simpatica!* It is wonderful how she understands, though she cannot yet talk much. But her eyes speak."

They served her dinner with special care that night, for kindness to an unfortunate fellow peasant had won what still needed winning of their hearts. She sat alone in the great dining-hall, with Giacomo moving swiftly about her on the marble floor. On the white linen and silver, on her face and crimson gown, gleamed

the light of many candles, standing in old-fashioned branching candlesticks. She pushed away her soup; it seemed an intrusion. Not until she heard Giacomo's murmur of disappointment as she refused salad did she rouse herself to do justice to the dressing he had made. Her eyes were the eyes of one living in a dream. Suddenly she wakened to the fact that she was hungry, and Giacomo grinned as she asked him to bring back the roast, and let him fill again with cool red wine the slender glass at her right hand. When the time for dessert came, she lifted a bunch of purple grapes and put them on her plate, breaking them off slowly with fingers that got stained.

"I shall wake up by and by!" she said, leaning back in her carved Florentine chair. "Only I hope it may be soon. Otherwise," she added, nibbling a bit of ginger, unconscious that her figures were mixed, "I shall forget my way back to the world."

CHAPTER

VI

THERE were two weeks of golden days. The sun rose clear over the green hills behind the villa, and dropped at night into the blue sea the other side of Rome. Daphne counted off the minutes in pulse beats that were actual pleasure. Between box hedges, past the clusters of roses, chrysanthemums, and dahlias in the villa garden, she walked, wondering that she had never known before that the mere crawling of the blood through the veins could mean joy. She was utterly alone, solitary, speechless; there were moments when the thought of her sister's present trouble, and of the letter she was expecting from New York, would take the color from the sky; but no vexatious thought could long resist the enchantment of this air, and she forgot to be unhappy. She saw no more of the

shepherd god, but always she was conscious of a presence in the sunshine on the hills.

On the eighth morning, as she paced the garden walks, a lizard scampered from her path, and she chased it as a five year old child might have done. A slim cypress tree stood in her way; she grasped it in her arms, and held it, laying her cheek against it as if it were a friend. Some new sense was dawning in her of kinship with branch and flower. She was forgetting how to think; she was Daphne, the Greek maiden, whose life was half the life of a tree.

When she took her arms from the tree she saw that he was there, looking at her from over the hedge, with the golden brown lights in eyes and hair, and the smile that had no touch of amusement in it, only of happiness.

"Sometimes," he murmured, "you remind me of Hebe, but on the whole, I think you are more like my sister Diana."

"Tell me about Diana," begged Daphne,

coming near the hedge and putting one hand on the close green leaves.

"We were great friends as children," observed Apollo. "It was I who taught her how to hunt, and we used to chase each other in the woods. When I went faster than she did, she used to get angry and say she would not play. Oh, those were glorious mornings, when the light was clear at dawn!"

"Why are you here?" asked Daphne abruptly, "and, if you will excuse me, where did you come from?"

"Surely you have heard about the gods being exiled from Greece! We wander, for the world has cast us out. Some day they will need us again, and will pluck the grass from our shrines, and then we shall come back to teach them."

"Teach them what?" asked the girl. She could make out nothing from the mystery of that face, and besides, she did not dare to look too closely.

"I should teach them joy," he answered simply.

They were so silent, looking at each other over the dark green hedge, that the lizards crept back in the sunshine close to their feet. Daphne's blue gown and smooth dark hair were outlined against the deep green of her cypress tree. A grapevine that had grown about the tree threw the shadow of delicate leaf and curling tendril on her pale cheek and scarlet lips. The expression of the heathen god as he looked at her denoted entire satisfaction.

"I know what you would teach them," she said slowly. "You would show them how to ignore suffering and pain. You would turn your back on need. Oh, that makes me think that I have forgotten to take your friend Antoli any soup lately! For three days I took it, and then, and then — I have been worried about things."

His smile was certainly one of amusement now.

"You must pardon me for seeming to change the subject," he said. "Why should you worry? There is nothing in life worth worrying about."

Fine scorn crept into the girl's face.

"No," he continued, answering her expression. "I don't ignore. I am glad because I have chosen to be glad, and because I have won my content. There is a strenuous peace for those who can fight their way through to it."

Suddenly, through the beauty of his color, the girl saw, graven as with a fine tool upon his face, a story of grief mastered. In the lines of chin and mouth and forehead it lurked there, half hidden by his smile.

"Tell me," said Daphne impulsively. Her hand moved nearer on the hedge, but she did not know it. He shook his head, and the veil dropped again.

"Why tell?" he asked. "Is n't there present misery enough before our eyes always, without remembering the old?"

She only gazed at him, with a puzzled frown on her forehead.

"So you think it is your duty to worry?" he asked, the joyous note coming back into his voice.

Daphne broke into a smile.

"I suppose I do," she confessed. "And it 's so hard here. I keep forgetting."

"Why do you want to remember?"

"It is so selfish not to."

He nodded, with an air of ancient wisdom.

"I have lived on this earth more years than you have, some thousands, you remember, and I can assure you that more people forget their fellows because of their own troubles than because of their own joys."

The girl pulled at a tendril of the vine with her fingers, eyeing her companion keenly.

"I presume," she said, with a tremor in her voice, "that you are an Englishman, or an American who has studied Greek thought deeply, being tired of modern people and modern ways, and that you are trying to get back to an older, simpler way of living."

"It has ever been the custom," said Apollo, gently taking the tendril of the vine from her fingers, "for a nation to refuse to believe the divinity of the others' gods."

"Anyway," mused the girl, not quite conscious that she was speaking aloud, "whatever you think, you are good to the shepherd."

He laughed outright.

"I find that most people are better than their beliefs," he answered. "Now, Miss Willis, I wonder if I dare ask you questions about the way of living that has brought you to believe in the divine efficacy of unhappiness."

"My father is a clergyman," answered the girl, with a smile.

"Exactly!" said the heathen god.

"We have lived very quietly, in one of the streets of older New York. I won't tell you the number, for of course it would not mean anything to you."

"Of course not," said Apollo.

"He is rector of a queer little old-fashioned church that has existed since the days of Washington. It is quaint and irregular, and I am very fond of it."

"It is n't the Little Church of All the Saints?" demanded her companion.

"It is. How did you know?"

"Divination," he answered.

"Oh!" said Daphne. "Why don't you divine the rest?"

"I should rather hear you tell it, if you don't mind."

"I have studied with my father a great deal," she went on. "And then, there have been a great many social things, for I have an aunt who

entertains a great deal, and she always needs me to help her. That has been fun, too."

"Then it has been religion and dinners," he summarized briefly.

"It has."

"With a Puritan ancestry, I suppose?"

"For a god," murmured Daphne, "it seems to me you know a great deal too much about some things, and not enough about others."

"I have brought you something," he said, suddenly changing the subject.

He lifted the sheepskin coat and held out to her a tiny lamb, whose heavy legs hung helpless, and whose skin shone pink through the little curls of wool. The girl stretched out her arms and gathered the little creature in them.

"A warm place to lie, and warm milk are what it needs," he said. "It was born out of its time, and its mother lies dead on the hills. Spring is for birth, not autumn."

Daphne watched him as he went back to his

sheep, then turned toward the house. Giacomo and Assunta saw her coming in her blue dress between the beds of flowers with the lambkin in her arms.

"Like our Lady," said Assunta, hurrying to the rescue.

The two brown ones asked no questions, possibly because of the difficulty of conversing with the Signorina, possibly from some profounder reason.

"Maybe the others do not see him," thought the girl in perplexity. "Maybe I dream him, but this lamb is real."

She sat in the sun on the marble steps of the villa, the lamb on her lap. A yellow bowl of milk stood on the floor, close to the little white head that dangled from her blue knee. Daphne, acting on Assunta's directions, curled one little finger under the milk and offered the tip of it to the lamb to suck. He responded eagerly, and

so she wheedled him into forgetfulness of his dead mother.

An hour later, as she paced the garden paths, a faint bleat sounded at the hem of her skirt, and four unsteady legs supported a weak little body that tumbled in pursuit of her.

CHAPTER

VII

Up the long smooth road that lay by the walls of the villa came toiling a team of huge grayish oxen, with monstrous spreading horns tied with blue ribbons. The cart that they drew was filled with baskets loaded with grapes, and a whiff of their fragrance smote Daphne's nostrils as she walked on the balcony in the morning air.

"Assunta, Assunta!" she cried, leaning over the gray, moss-coated railing, "what is it?"

Assunta was squatting on the ground in the garden below, digging with a blunt knife at the roots of a garden fern. There was a gray red cotton shawl over her head, and a lilac apron upon her knees.

"It's the vintage, Signorina," she answered, "the wine makes itself."

"Everything does itself in this most lazy country," remarked Daphne. "Dresses make themselves, boots repair themselves, food eats itself. There 's just one idiom, *si fa*," —

"What?" asked Assunta.

"Reflections," answered the girl, smiling down on her. "Assunta, may I go and help pick grapes?"

"*Ma che!*" screamed the peasant woman, losing her balance in her sudden emotion and going down on her knees in the loosened soil. "The Signorina, the sister of the Contessa, go to pick grapes in the vineyard?"

"*Si*," answered Daphne amiably. Her face was alive with laughter.

"But the Contessa would die of shame!" asserted Assunta, rising with bits of dirt clinging to her apron, and gesticulating with the knife. "It would be a scandal, and all the pickers would say, 'Behold the mad Englishwoman!'"

She looked up beseechingly at her mistress. She and Giacomo never could tell beforehand which sentences the Signorina was going to understand.

"Come with me!" coaxed the girl.

"But does the Signorina want to" —

"I want everything!" Daphne interrupted. "Grapes and flowers and wine and air and sunshine. I want to see and feel and taste and touch and smell everything there is. The days are too short to take it all in. Hurry!"

As most of this outburst was in English, Assunta could do nothing but look up with an air of deepened reproach. Daphne disappeared from the railing, and a minute later was at Assunta's side.

"Come, come, come!" she cried, pulling her by the lilac apron. "Our time is brief, and we must gather rosebuds while we may. I am young and you are old, and neither of us has any time to lose."

Before she knew it, Assunta was trotting meekly down the road at the young lady's heels, carrying a great flat basket for the Signorina's use in picking grapes.

They were bound for the lower slopes; the grapes ripened earlier there, the peasant woman explained, and the frosts came later. The loaded wagons that they met were going to Arata, a wine press in the valley beyond this nearest hill. Perhaps the Signorina would like to go there to see the new wine foaming in the vat? Strangers often went to see this.

Daphne's blood went singing through her veins with some new sense of freedom and release, for the gospel of this heathen god was working in her pulses. Wistfully her eyes wandered over the lovely slopes with their clothing of olive and of vine, and up and down the curling long white roads. At some turning of the way, or at some hilltop where the road seemed to touch the blue sky, surely she would

see him coming with that look of divine content upon his face!

Suddenly she realized that they were inside the vineyard walls, for fragrance assailed her nostrils, fragrance of ripened grapes, of grapes crushed under foot as the swift pickers went snipping the full purple bunches with their shears.

"I shall see Bacchus coming next," she said to herself, but hoping that it would not be Bacchus. "He will go singing down the hill with his Mænads behind him, with fluttering hair and draperies."

It was not nearly so picturesque as she had hoped, she confessed to herself, as her thoughts came down to their customary level. The vineyard of her dreams, with its long, trailing vines, was not found in this country; there were only close-clipped plants trained to stakes. But there was a sound of talking and of laughter, and the pickers, moving among the even lines in

their gay rags, lent motley color to the picture. There was scarlet of waistcoat or of petticoat, blue and saffron of jacket and apron, and a blending of all bright tints in the kerchiefs above the hair. The rich dark soil made a background for it all: the moving figures, the clumps of pale green vine leaves, the great baskets of piled-up grapes.

Assunta was chattering eagerly with a young man who smiled, and took off his hat to the Signorina, and said something polite, with a show of white teeth. Daphne did not know what it was, but she took the pair of scissors that were given her, and began to cut bunch after bunch of grapes. If she had realized that the peasant woman, her heart full of shame, had confessed to the overseer her young lady's whim, and had won permission for her to join the ranks of the pickers, she might have been less happy. As it was, she noticed nothing, but diligently cut her grapes, piling them, misty

with bloom, flecked with gold sunlight, in her basket. Then she found a flat stone and sat on it, watching the workers and slowly eating a great bunch of grapes. She had woven green leaves into the cord of her red felt hat; the peasants as they passed smiled back to her in swift recognition of her friendliness and charm.

Her thoughts flamed up within her with sudden anger at herself. This vivid joy in the encompassing beauty had but one meaning: it was her sense of the glad presence of this new creature, man or god, who seemed continually with her, were he near or far.

"I 'm as foolish as a sixteen-year-old girl," she murmured, fingering the grapes in the basket with their setting of green leaves, "and yet, and yet he is n't a man, really; he is only a state of mind!"

She sat, with the cool air of autumn on her cheeks, watching the pickers, who went with even motion up the great slope. Sometimes

there was silence on the hillside; now and then there was a fragment of song. One gay, tripping air, started by three women who stood idle with arms akimbo for a moment on the hillside, was caught up and echoed back by invisible singers on the other side of the hill. And once the red-cheeked Italian lads who were carrying loaded baskets down toward the vineyard gates burst into responsive singing that made her think that she had found, on the Roman hills, some remnant of the old Bacchic music, of the alternate strains that marked the festival of the god of wine. It was something like this: —

Carlo.

"Of all the gifts of all the gods
I choose the ruddy wine.
The brimming glass shall be my lot"—

Giovanni (interrupting).

"Carlotta shall be mine!
"Take you the grape, I only ask
The shadow of the vine
To screen Carlotta's golden head"—

Carlo (interrupting).

"Give me the ruddy wine."

Together.

G. "Carlotta shall be mine!"

C. "Give me the ruddy wine!"

Assunta was visibly happy when the Signorina signified her willingness to go home. The pride of the house servant was touched by being compelled to come too closely in contact with the workers in the fields, and where is there pride like that of a peasant? But her joy was short-lived. Outside the great iron gates stood a team of beautiful fawn-colored oxen, with spotless flanks, and great, blue, patient eyes looking out from under broad foreheads. They were starting, with huge muscles quivering under their white skin, to carry a load of grapes to the wine press, the yield of this year being too great for the usual transportation on donkey back.

"Assunta, I go too," cried Daphne.

Five minutes later the Signorina, with her unwilling handmaid at her side, rode in triumph up the broad highway with the measured motion of slow oxen feet. Place had been made for them among the grape baskets, and they sat on folded blankets, Assunta's face wearing the expression of one who was a captive indeed, the Signorina's shining with simple happiness and somewhat stained by grapes.

The wine press was nothing after all but a machine, and though a certain interest attached to the great vats, hollowed out in the tufa rock, into which the new-made wine trickled, Daphne soon signified her willingness to depart. Before she left they brought her a great glass of rich red grape juice fresh from the newly crushed grapes. She touched her lips to it, then looked about her. Assunta was talking to the workman who had given it to her, and he was looking the other way. She feasted her eyes on the color of the thing she held in her hand. It was

a rough glass whose shallow bowl had the old Etruscan curves of beauty, and the crimson wine caught the sunlight in a thousand ways. Bending over, she poured it out slowly on the green grass.

"A libation to Apollo," she said, not without reverence.

CHAPTER VIII

"I SHALL call you," said Daphne to the lamb on the fourth day of his life with her, "I shall call you Hermes, because you go so fast."

Very fast indeed he went. By garden path, or on the slopes below the villa, he followed her with swift gallop, interrupted by many jumps and gambols, and much frisking of his tail. If he lost himself in his wayward pursuit of his mistress, a plaintive bleat summoned her to his side. On the marble stairs of the villa, even in the sacred precincts of the salon, she heard the tinkle of his hard little hoofs, and she had no courage to turn him back. He bleated so piteously outside the door when his lady dined that at last he won the desire of his heart and lapped milk from a bowl on the floor at her side as she ate her salad or broke her grapes.

"What scandal!" muttered Giacomo every time he brought the bowl. The Contessa would discharge him if she knew! But he always remembered, even if Daphne forgot, and meekly dried the milk from his sleek black trousers whenever Hermes playfully dashed his hoof, instead of his nose, into the bowl. As Giacomo explained to Assunta in the kitchen, it was for the Signorina, and the Signorina was very lonely.

She was less lonely with Hermes, for he spoke her language.

"It is almost time to hear from Eustace," Daphne told him one day, as she sat on a stone under an olive tree in the orchard below the house. Hermes stood before her, his head down, his tail dejectedly drooped.

"Perhaps," she added, dreamily looking up at the blue sky through its broken veil of gray-green olive leaves, "perhaps he does not want me back, and the letter will tell me so."

Hermes gave an incredible jump high in the air, lighted on his four feet, pranced, gamboled, curveted.

"It is very hard to know one's duty or to do it, Hermes," said Daphne, patting his woolly brow. Hermes intimated, by means of frisking legs and tail, that he would not try.

"I believe you are bewitched," said the girl, suddenly taking him up in her arms. "I believe you are some little changeling god sent by your master Apollo to put his thoughts into my head."

He squirmed, and she put him down. Then she gave him a harmless slap on his fleecy side.

"But you are n't a good interpreter, Hermes. Some way I think that his joyousness lies the other side of pain. He never ran away from hard things."

This was more than the lambkin could understand or bear, and he fled, hiding from her in

the tall fern of a thicket in a corner of the field.

The days were drifting by too fast. Already the Contessa Accolanti had been away three weeks, and her letters held out no hope of an immediate return. Giacomo and Assunta were very sorry for their young mistress, not knowing how little she was sorry for herself, and they tried to entertain her. They had none of the hard exclusiveness of English servants, but admitted her generously to such of their family joys as she would share. Giacomo introduced her to the stables and the horses; Assunta initiated her into some of the mysteries of Italian cooking. Tommaso, the scullion, and Pia, the maid, stood by in grinning delight one day when the Contessa's sister learned to make macaroni.

"Now I know," said Daphne, after she had stood for half an hour under the smoke-browned walls of the kitchen watching Assunta's manipulation of eggs and flour, the long kneading,

the rolling out of a thin layer of dough, with the final cutting into thin strips; "to make Sunday and festal-day macaroni you take all the eggs there are, and mix them up with flour, and do all that to it; and then you boil it on the stove, and make a sauce for it out of everything there is in the house, bits of tomato, and parsley, and onion, and all kinds of meat. *E vero?*"

"*Si*," said Assunta, marveling at the patois that the Signorina spoke, and wondering if it contained Indian words.

The very sight of the rows of utensils on the kitchen walls deepened the rebellious mood of this descendant of the Puritans.

"Even the pots and pans have lovely shapes," said Daphne wistfully, for the slender necks, the winning curves, the lines of shallow bowl and basin bore testimony to the fact that the meanest thought of this people was a thought of beauty. "I wonder why the Lord gave to them the curve, to us the angle?"

When the macaroni was finished, Assunta invited the Signorina to go with her to a little house set by itself on the sloping hill back of the kitchen.

"*E carin'*, eh?" demanded Assunta, as she opened the door.

Fragrance met them at the threshold, fragrance of fruit and of honey. The warm sun poured in through the dirty, cobwebbed window when Assunta lifted the shade. Ranged on shelves along the wall stood bottles of yellow oil; partly buried in the ground were numerous jars of wine, bottles and jars both keeping the beautiful Etruscan curves. On shallow racks were spread bunches of yellow and of purple grapes, and golden combs of honey gleamed from dusky corners.

"*Ecco!*" said Assunta, pointing to the wine jar from which she had been filling the bottle in her hand. "The holy cross! Does the Signorina see it?"

"*Si*," said Daphne.

"And here also?" asked Assunta, pointing to another.

The girl nodded doubtfully. Two irregular scratches could, by imaginative vision, be translated into a cross.

"It 's on every one, Signorina," said Assunta triumphantly. "And nobody puts it there. It comes by itself."

"Really?" asked the girl.

"*Veramente*," replied the peasant woman. "It has to, and not only here, but everywhere. You see, years and years ago, there were heathen spirits in the wine, and they made trouble when our Lord came. I have heard that the jars burst and the wine was wasted because the god of the wine was angry that the real God was born. And it lasted till San Pietro came and exorcised the wicked spirit, and he put a cross on a wine jar to keep him away. Since then every wine jar bears somewhere the sign of the cross."

"What became of the poor god?" asked Daphne.

"He fled, I suppose to hell," answered Assunta piously.

"Poor heathen gods!" murmured Daphne.

The sunshine, flooding the little room, fell full on her face, and made red lights in her brown hair.

"There was a god of the sun, too, named Apollo," she said, warming her hands in level rays. "Was he banished too?"

Assunta shrugged her shoulders.

"Who knows? They dare not show their faces here since the Holy Father has blessed the land."

Hermes bleated at the door, and the trio descended the hill together, Assunta carrying a basket of grapes and a bottle of yellow oil, Daphne with a slender flask of red wine in her hand.

The next day the heavens opened, and rain

poured down. The cascades above the villa became spouting waterfalls; the narrow path beside them a leaping brook. The rain had not the steady and persistent motion of well-conducted rain; it came in sheets, blown by sudden gusts against the windows, or driven in wild spurts among the cypresses. The world from the villa windows seemed one blur of watery green, with a thin gray veil of mist to hide it.

Daphne paced the mosaic floors in idleness, or spelled out the meaning of Petrarchan sonnets in an old vellum copy she had found in the library. Sometimes she sat brooding in one of the faded gilt and crimson chairs in the salon, by the diminutive fireplace where two or three tiny twigs burned out their lives in an Italian thought of heat.

What did a Greek god do when sunshine disappeared? she wondered. Or had the god of the sun gone away altogether, and was this del-

uge the result? The shepherd Antoli had been taken home, Giacomo assured her, but he was exceedingly reticent when asked who was herding the sheep, only shrugging his shoulders with a "*Chi lo sa?*"

On the second day of the rain Daphne saw that the flock had come near the house. From the dining-room window she could see the sheep, with water soaking into their thick wool. Some one was guarding them. With little streams dashing from the drooping felt hat to the sheepskin clad shoulders, the keeper stood, motionless in the pelting rain. The sheep ate greedily the wet, juicy grass, while the shepherd leaned on his staff and watched. Undoubtedly it was Antoli's peasant successor, Daphne thought, as she stood with her face to the dripping window pane. Then the shepherd turned, and she recognized, under the wet hat brim, the glowing color and undaunted smile of her masquerading

god. Whether he saw her or not she could not tell, but she stood by the storm-washed window in her scarlet house gown and watched, longing to give him shelter.

CHAPTER IX

He came to her next through music, when the rain clouds had broken away. That divine whistle, mellow, mocking, irresistible, still was heard when morning lay on the hills. Often, when afternoon had touched all the air to gold, when the shadows of chestnut and cypress and gnarled olive lay long on the grass, other sounds floated down to Daphne, music from some instrument that she did not know. It was no harp, surely, yet certain clear, ringing notes seemed to come from the sweeping of harp strings; again, it had all the subtle, penetrating melody of the violin. Whatever instrument gave it forth, it drew the girl's heart after it to wander its own way. When it was gay it won her feet to some dance measure, and all alone in the great empty rooms she would move to it

with head thrown back and her whole body swaying in a new sense of rhythm. When it was sad, it set her heart to beating in great throbs, for then it begged and pleaded. There was need in it, a human cry that surely was not the voice of a god. It spoke out of a great yearning that answered to her own. Whether it was swift or slow she loved it, and waited for it day by day, thinking of Apollo and his harping to the muses nine.

So her old life and her old mood slipped away like a garment no longer needed: her days were set to melody, and her nights to pleasant dreams. The jangle of street cars and the twinges of conscience, the noises of her native city, and her heart searchings in the Little Church of All the Saints faded to the remoteness of a faint gray bar of cloud that makes the sunset brighter in the west. She went singing among the olives or past the fountain under the ilexes on the hill: duties and perplexities vanished in the clear

sunshine and pleasant shadow of this golden world.

And all this meant that she had forgotten about the mails. She had ceased to long for letters containing good news, or to fear that one full of bad tidings would come, and every one knows that such a state of mind as this is serious. Now, when Assunta found her one morning, pacing the long, frescoed hall, by the side of the running water, and put a whole sheaf of letters into her hand, Daphne looked at them cautiously, and started to open one, then lost her courage and held them for a while to get used to them. Finally she went upstairs and changed her dress, putting on her short skirt and red felt hat, and walked out into the highway with Hermes skipping after her. She walked rapidly up the even way, under the high stone walls green with overhanging ivy and wistaria vines, and the lamb kept pace with her with his gay gallop, broken now and then

by a sidelong leap of sheer joy up into the air. Presently she found a turning that she had not known before, marked by a little wayside shrine, and taking it, followed a narrow grass-grown road that curled about the side of a hill.

She read her father's letter first, walking slowly and smiling. If he were only here to share this wide beauty! Then she read her sister's, which was full of woeful exclamations and bad news. The sick man was slowly dying, and they could not leave him. Meanwhile she was desolated by thinking of her little sister. Of course she was safe, for Giacomo and Assunta were more trustworthy than the Italian government, but it must be very stupid, and she had meant to give Daphne such a gay time at the villa. She would write at once to some English friends at Lake Scala, ten miles away, to see if they could not do something to relieve her sister's solitude.

"To relieve my solitude!" gasped Daphne. "Oh, I am so afraid something will!"

There were several other letters, all from friends at home. One, in a great square envelope, addressed with an English scrawl, she dreaded, and she kept it for the last. When she did tear it open her face grew quite pale. There was much in it about duty and consecration, and much concerning two lives sacrificed to the same great ideal. It breathed thoughts of denial and of annihilation of self, and, — yes, Eustace took her at her word and was ready to welcome again the old relation. If she would permit him, he would send back the ring.

Hermes hid behind a stone and dashed out at his mistress to surprise her, expecting to be chased as usual, but Daphne could not run. With heavy feet and downcast eyes she walked along the green roadway, then, when her knees suddenly became weak, sat down on a stone and covered her face with her hands. She had

not known until this moment how she had been hoping that two and two would not make four; she had not really believed that this could be the result of her letter of atonement. Her soul had traveled far since she wrote that letter, and it was hard to find the way back. Hiding the brown and purple distances of the Campagna came pictures of dim, candle-lighted spaces, of a thin face with a setting of black and white priestly garments, and in her ears was the sound of a voice endlessly intoning. It made up a vision of the impossible.

She sat there a long, long time, and when she wakened to a consciousness of where she was, it was a whining voice that roused her.

"Signorina, for the love of heaven, give me a few soldi, for I am starving."

Daphne looked up and was startled, and yet old beggar women were common enough sights here among the hills. This one had an evil look, with her cunning, half-shut eyes.

The girl shook her head.

"I have no money with me," she remarked.

"But Signorina, so young, so beautiful, surely she has money with her." A dirty brown hand came all too close to Daphne's face, and she sprang to her feet.

"I have spoken," she said severely, giving a little stamp. "I have none. Now go away."

The whining continued, unintermittent. The old woman came closer, and her hand touched the girl's skirt. Wrenching herself away, Daphne found herself in the grasp of two skinny arms, and an actual physical struggle began. The girl had no time for fear, and suddenly help came. A firm hand caught the woman's shoulder, and the victim was free.

"Are you hurt?" asked Apollo anxiously.

She shook her head, smiling.

"Frightened?"

"No. Don't you always rescue me?"

"But this is merest accident, my being here.

It really is n't safe for you alone on these roads."

"I knew you were near."

"And yet, I have just this minute come round the hill. You could not possibly have seen me."

"I have ways of knowing," said Daphne, smiling demurely.

A faint little bleat interrupted them.

"Oh, oh!" cried the girl, "she is running away with Hermes!"

Never did Apollo move more swiftly than he did then! Daphne followed, with flying feet. He reached the beggar woman, held her, took the lamb with one hand from her and handed it to Daphne. There followed a scene which the girl remembered afterward with a curious sense of misgiving and of question. The thief gave one glance at the beautiful, angry face of the man, then fell at his feet, groveling and beseeching. What she was saying the girl did not

know, but her face and figure bore a look of more than mortal fear.

"What does she think him?" murmured the girl. Then she turned away with him, and, with the lamb at their heels, they walked together back along the grassy road.

"You look very serious," remarked her protector. "You are sure it is not fright?"

She shook her head, holding up her bundle of letters.

"Bad news?"

"No, good," she answered, smiling bravely.

"I hope good news will be infrequent," he answered. "You look like Iphigenia going to be sacrificed."

"I will admit that there is a problem," said the girl. "There 's a question about my doing something."

"And you know it must be right to do it because you hate it?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Don't you think so, too? Now when you answer," she added triumphantly, "I shall know what kind of god you are."

They had reached the turning of the ways, and he stopped, as if intending to leave her.

"I cannot help you," he said sadly, "for I do not know the case. Only, I think it is best not to decide by any abstruse rule. Life is life's best teacher, and out of one's last experience comes insight for the next. But don't be too sure that duty and unhappiness are one."

She left him, standing by the little wayside shrine with a strange look on his face. A tortured Christ hung there, casting the shadow of pain upon the passers-by. The expression in the brown eyes of the heathen god haunted her all the way down the hill, and throughout the day: they seemed to understand, and yet be glad.

CHAPTER X

It was nine o'clock as the Signorina descended the stairs. Through the open doorway morning met her, crisp and cool, with sunshine touching grass and green branch, still wet with dew. The very footfalls of the girl on the shallow marble steps were eager and expectant, and her face was gayer than those of the nymphs in the frescoes on the wall. At the bottom of the stairs, Giacomo met her, his face wreathed in smiles.

"Bertuccio has returned," he announced.

"*Si*, *si*, Signorina," came the voice of Assunta, who was pushing her way through the dining-room door behind Giacomo. She had on her magenta Sunday shawl, and the color of her wrinkled cheeks almost matched it.

"What is Bertuccio?" asked the girl. "A kitten?"

"A kitten!" gasped Assunta.

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" swore Giacomo.

Then the two brown ones devoted mind and body to explanation. Giacomo gesticulated and waved the napkin he had in his hand; Assunta shook her black silk apron: and they both spoke at once.

"*Il mio Bertuccio!* It is my little son, Signorina, and my only, and the Signorina has never seen his like. When he was three years old he wore clothing for five years, and now he is six inches taller than his father."

This and much more said Assunta, and she said it as one word. Giacomo, keeping pace and giving syllable for syllable, remarked: —

"It is our Bertuccio who has been working in a tunnel in the Italian Alps, and has come home for rest. He is engineer, Signorina, and has genius. And before he became this he was guide here in the mountains, and he knows every path, every stone, every tree."

"What?" asked Daphne feebly.

Then, in a multitude of words that darkened knowledge, they said it all over again. Bertuccio, the light of their eyes, the sole hope of their old age, had come home. He could be the Signorina's guide among the hills, being very strong, very trusty, *molto forte*, *molto fedele*.

"Oh, I know!" cried the Signorina, with a sudden light in her face. "Bertuccio is your son!"

"*Si*, *si*, *si*, Signorina!" exclaimed Giacomo and Assunta together, ushering her into the dining-room.

"It is the blessed saints who have managed it," added Assunta devoutly. "A wreath of flowers from Rome, all gauze and spangles, will I lay at the shrine of our Lady, and there shall be a long red ribbon to say my thanks in letters of gold."

The hope of the house was presented to the

Signorina after breakfast. He was a broad-shouldered, round-headed offshoot of Italian soil, with honest brown eyes like those of both father and mother. It was a face to be trusted, Daphne knew, and when, recovering from the embarrassment caused by his parents' pride in him, he blurted out the fact that he had already been to the village that morning to find a little donkey for the Signorina's wider journeyings, the girl welcomed the plan with delight. Grinning with pride Bertuccio disappeared among the stables, and presently returned, leading an *asinetto*. It was a little, dun-colored thing, wearing a red-tasseled bridle and a small sheepskin saddle with red girth, but all the gay trappings could not soften the old primeval sadness of the donkey's face, under his long, questioning ears. So Daphne won palfrey and cavalier.

In the succeeding days the two jogged for hours together over the mountain roads. Now they followed some grassy path climbing gently

upward to the site of a buried town, where only mound and gray fragment of stone marked garden and forum. Here was a bit of wall, with a touch of gay painting mouldering on an inner surface, — Venus, in robe of red, rising from a daintily suggested sea in lines of green. They gathered fragments of old mosaic floor in their hands, blue lapis lazuli, yellow bits of giallo antico, red porphyry, trodden by gay feet and sad, unnumbered years ago. They found broken pieces of iridescent glass that had fallen, perhaps, from shattered wine cups of the emperors, and all these treasures Bertuccio stored away in his wide pockets. Again, they climbed gracious heights and looked down over slopes and valleys, where deep grass grew over rich, crumbling earth, deposit of dead volcanoes, or saw, circled by soft green hills, some mountain lake, reflecting the perfect blue of Italian sky.

Bertuccio usually walked behind; Daphne rode on ahead, with the sun burning her cheeks,

and the air, fragrant with the odor of late ripening grapes on the upper hillsides, bringing intoxication. She seemed to herself so much a thing of falling rain, rich earth, and wakening sunshine, that she would not have been surprised to find the purple bloom of those same grapes gathering on her cheeks, or her soft wisps of hair curling into tendrils, or spreading into green vine leaves. They usually came home in the splendor of sunset, tired, happy, the red of Daphne's felt hat, the gorgeousness of Bertuccio's blue trousers and yellow waistcoat lighting the gloom of the cool, green-shaded ways. Hermes always ran frisking to meet them, outstripping by his swiftness the slow plodding of the little ass. Perhaps the lambkin felt the shadow of a certain neglect through these long absences, but at least he was generous and loved his rival. Quitting the kitchen and dining-room, he chose for his portion the pasture where the donkey grazed, in silence and in sadness, and

frisked dangerously near his comrade's heels. For all his melancholy, the *asinetto* was not insensible to caresses, and at night, when the lamb cuddled close to him as the two lay in the grass in the darkness, would curl his nose round now and then protectingly to see how this small thing fared.

So Daphne kept forgetting, forgetting, and nothing recalled her to her perplexity, except her donkey. San Pietro Martire she named him, for on his face was written the patience and the suffering of the saints. Some un-Italian sense of duty stiffened his hard little legs, gave rigid strength to his back. Willing to trudge on with his load, willing to rest, carrying his head a little bent, blinking mournfully at the world from under the drab hair on his forehead, San Pietro stood as a type of the disciplined and chastened soul. His very way of cropping the grass had something ascetic in it, reminding his mistress of Eustace at a festive dinner.

"San Pietro, San Pietro," said Daphne one day, when Bertuccio was plodding far in the rear, whistling as he followed, "San Pietro, must I do it?"

There was a drooping forward of the ears, a slight bending of the head, as the little beast put forth more strength to meet the difficulty of rising ground.

"San Pietro, do you know what you are advising? Do you at all realize what it is to be a clergyman's wife?"

The steady straining of the donkey's muscles seemed to say that, to whatever station in life it pleased Providence to call him, he would think only of duty.

Then Daphne alighted and sat on a stone, with the donkey's face to hers, taking counsel of those long ears which were always eloquent, whether pricked forward in expectation or laid back in wrath.

"San Pietro, if I should give it up, and stay

here and live, — for I never knew before what living is, — if I should just try to keep this sunshine and these great spaces of color, what would you think of me?"

Eyes, ears, and the tragic corners of the mouth revealed the thought of this descendant of the burden bearers for all the earth's thousands of years.

"Little beast, little beast," said Daphne, burying her face in the brownish fuzz of his neck, and drying her eyes there, "you are the one thing in this land of beauty that links me with home. You are the Pilgrim Fathers and the Catechism in one! You are the Puritan Conscience made visible! I will do it; I promise."

San Pietro Martire looked round with mild inquiry on his face as to the meaning and the purpose of caresses in a hard world like this.

CHAPTER XI

Bertuccio sprawled on his stomach on the grassy floor of the presence chamber in a palace of the Cæsars', kicking with one idle foot a bit of stone that had once formed the classic nose of a god. San Pietro Martire was quietly grazing in the long spaces of the Philosophers' Hall, nibbling deftly green blades of grass that grew at the bases of the broken pillars. Near by lay the old amphitheatre, with its roof of blue sky, and its rows of grassy seats, circling a level stage and pit, and rising, one above another, in irregular outlines of green. Here, in the spot on which the central royal seat had once been erected, sat Daphne on her Scotch plaid steamer blanket: her head was leaning back against the turf, her lips were slightly parted, her eyes half closed. She thought that she was meditating

on the life that had gone on in this imperial villa two thousand years ago: its banquets, its philosophers' disputes, its tragedies and comedies played here with tears and laughter. In reality she was half asleep.

They were only a half mile from home, measuring by a straight line through the intervening hill; in time they were two hours away. San Pietro had climbed gallantly, with little silvery bells tinkling at his ears, to the summit of the mountain, and had descended, with conviction and with accuracy, planting firm little hard hoofs in the slippery path where the dark soil bore a coating of green grass and moss. For all their hard morning's work they were still on the confines of the Villa Gianelli, whose kingdom was partly a kingdom of air and of mountain.

Drowsing there in the old theatre in the sun, Daphne presently saw, stepping daintily through one of the entrances at the side, an audience of

white sheep. They overspread the stage, cropping as they went. They climbed the green encircling seats, leaping up or down, where a softer tuft of grass invited. They broke the dreamy silence with the muffled sound of their hoofs, and an occasional bleat.

The girl knew them now. She had seen before the brown-faced twins, both wearing tiny horns; they always kept together. She knew the great white ewe with a blue ribbon on her neck, and the huge ram with twisted horns that made her half afraid. Would he mind Scotch plaid, she wondered, as he raised his head and eyed her? She sat alert, ready for swift flight up the slope behind her in case of attack, but he turned to his pasture in the pit with the air of one ready to waive trifles, and the girl leaned back again.

When Apollo, the keeper of sheep, entered, Daphne received his greeting with no surprise: even if he had come without these forerunners

she would have known that he was near. It was she who broke the silence as he approached.

"A theatre seems a singularly appropriate place for you and your flock," she remarked. "You make a capital actor."

There was no laughter in his eyes to-day, and he did not answer. A wistful look veiled the triumphant gladness of his face.

"They did n't play pastorals in olden time, did they?" asked Daphne.

"No," he answered, "they lived them. When they had forgotten how to do that they began to act."

He took a flute from his pocket and began to play. A cry rang out through the gladness of the notes, and it brought tears to the girl's eyes. He stopped, seeing them there, and put the flute back into his pocket.

"Did you take my advice the other day?" he asked.

"The advice was very general," said Daphne.

"I presume an oracle's always is. No, I did not follow it."

"Antigone, Antigone," he murmured.

"Why Antigone?" demanded the girl.

"Because your duty is dearer to you than life, and love."

"Please go down there," said the girl imperiously, "and play Antigone for me. Make me see it and feel it. I have been sitting here for an hour wishing that I could realize here a tragedy of long ago."

He bowed submissively.

"Commands from Cæsar's seat must always be obeyed," he observed. "Do you know Greek, Antigone?"

She nodded.

"I know part of this play by heart," she faltered. "My father taught me Greek words when I was small enough to ride his foot."

He stepped down among the sheep to the grassy stage, laying aside his hat and letting the

sun sparkle on his bright hair. The odd sheepskin coat lent a touch of grotesqueness to his beauty as he began.

"'Nay, be thou what thou wilt; but I will bury him: well for me to die in doing that. I shall rest, a loved one with him whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living: in that world I shall abide forever.'"

Slow, full, and sweet the words came, beating like music on the girl's heart. All the sorrow of earth seemed gathered up in the undertones, all its hunger and thirst for life and love: in it rang the voice of a will stronger than death and strong as love.

The sheep lifted their heads and looked on anxiously, as if for a moment even the heart of a beast were touched by human sorrow. From over the highest ridge of this green amphitheatre San Pietro looked down with the air of one who had nothing more to learn of woe. Apollo

stood in the centre of the stage, taking one voice, then another: now the angry tone of the tyrant, Creon, now the wail of the chorus, hurt but undecided, then breaking into the unspeakable sweetness and firmness of Antigone's tones. The sheep went back to their nibbling; San Pietro trotted away with his jingling bells, but Daphne sat with her face leaning on her hands, and slow tears trickling over her fingers.

The despairing lover's cry broke in on Antigone's sorrow; Hæmon, "bitter for the baffled hope of his marriage," pleaded with his father Creon for the life of his beloved. Into his arguments for mercy and justice crept that cry of the music on the hills that had sounded through lonely hours in Daphne's ears. It was the old call of passion, pleading, imperious, irresistible, and the girl on Cæsar's seat answered to it as harp strings answer to the master's hand. The wail of Antigone seemed to come from the depths of her own being: —

"Bear me witness, in what sort, unwept of friends, and by what laws I pass to the rock-closed prison of my strange tomb, ah me unhappy! . . . No bridal bed, no bridal song hath been mine, no joy of marriage."

The sun hung low above the encircling hills when the lover's last cry sounded in the green theatre, drowning grief in triumph as he chose death with his beloved before all other good. Then there was silence, while the round, golden sun seemed resting in a red-gold haze on the hilltop, and Daphne, sitting with closed eyes, felt the touch of two hands upon her own.

"Did you understand?" asked a voice that broke in its tenderness.

She nodded, with eyes still closed, for she dared not trust them open. He bent and kissed her hands, where the tears had fallen on them, then, turning, called his sheep. Three minutes later there was no trace of him or of them: they

had vanished as if by magic, leaving silence and shadow. The girl climbed the hill toward home on San Pietro's back, shaken, awed, afraid.

CHAPTER XII

If Bertuccio had but shown any signs of having seen her companion of yesterday, Daphne's bewilderment would have been less; but to keep meeting a being who claimed to belong to another world, who came and went, invisible, it would seem, when he chose, to other eyes except her own, might well rouse strange thoughts in the mind of a girl cut off from her old life in the world of commonplace events. To be sure, the shepherd Antoli had seen him, but had spoken of him voluntarily as a mysterious creature, one of the blessed saints come down to aid the sick. The beggar woman had seen him, but had fallen prostrate at his feet as in awe of supernatural presence. When the wandering god had talked across the hedge the eyes of Giacomo and Assunta had apparently been holden;

and now Bertuccio, whose ears were keen, and whose eyes, in their lazy Italian fashion, saw more than they ever seemed to, Bertuccio had been all the afternoon within a stone's throw of the place where the god had played to her, and Bertuccio gave no sign of having seen a man. She eyed him questioningly as they started out the next morning on their way to the ruins of some famous baths on the mountain facing them.

There was keenness in the autumn air that morning, but the green slopes far and near bore no trace of flaming color or of decay, as in fall at home; it was rather like a glimpse of some cool, eternal spring. A stream of water trickled down under thick grass at the side of the road, and violets grew there.

"San Pietro!" said Daphne, with a little tug at the bridle. The long ears were jerked hastily back to hear what was to come. "I know you disapprove of me, for you saw it all."

The ears kept that position in which any one who has ever loved a donkey recognizes scathing criticism. Daphne fingered one of them with her free hand.

"It is only on your back that I feel any strength of mind," she added. "When I am by myself something seems sweeping me away, as the tides sweep driftwood out to sea; but here, resolution crawls up through my body. We must be a new kind of centaur, San Pietro."

Suddenly her face went down between his ears.

"But if you and I united do drive him away, what shall we do, — afterwards?"

"Signorina!" called Bertuccio, running up behind them. "Look! The olives pick themselves."

At a turn in the road the view had opened. There, in a great orchard on the side of the hill, the peasants were gathering olives before the coming of the frost. There were scores of pick-

ers wearing great gay-colored aprons in which they placed the olives as they gathered them from the trees. Ladders leaned against knotty tree trunks; baskets filled with the green fruit stood on the ground. Ladder and basket suggested the apple orchards of her native land, but the motley colors of kerchief and apron, yellow, magenta, turquoise, and green, and the gray of the eternal olive trees with the deep blue of the sky behind them, recalled her to the enchanted country where she was fast losing the landmarks of home.

"Signorina Daphne," said Bertuccio, speaking slowly as to a child, "did you ever hear them tell of the maiden on the hills up here who was carried away by a god?"

Daphne turned swiftly and tried to read his face. It was no less expressionless than usual.

"No," she answered. "Tell me. I am fond of stories."

They were climbing the winding road again,

leaving the olive pickers behind. Bertuccio walked near, holding the donkey's tail to steady his steps.

"It was long ago, ages and ages. Her father had the care of an olive orchard that was old, older than our Lord," said Bertuccio, devoutly crossing himself. "There was one tree in it that was enormously big, as large as this, — see the measure of my arms! It was open and hollow, but growing as olives will when there is every reason why they should be dead. One night the family were eating their *polenta* — has the Signorina tasted our *polenta?* It makes itself from chestnuts, and it is very good. I must speak to my mother to offer some to the Signorina. Well, the door opened without any knocking, and a stranger stood there: he was young, and beyond humanity, beautiful."

Bertuccio paused; the girl felt slow red climbing to her cheek. She dared not look behind, yet she would have given half her possessions

to see the expression of his face. Leaning forward, she played with the red tassels at San Pietro's ears.

"Go on! go on!" she commanded. "*Avanti!*"

San Pietro thought that the words were meant for him, and indeed they were more appropriate here for donkey than for man.

"He sat with them and shared their *polenta*," continued Bertuccio, walking more rapidly to keep up with San Pietro's quickened step. "And he made them all afraid. It was not that he had any terrible look, or that he did anything strange, only, each glance, each motion told that he was more than merely man. And he looked at the maiden with eyes of love, and she at him," said Bertuccio, lacking art to keep his hearer in suspense. "She too was beautiful, as beautiful, perhaps, as the Signorina," continued the story-teller.

Daphne looked at him sharply: did he mean

any further comparison? There were hot waves now on neck and face, and her heart was beating furiously.

"He came often, and he always met the maiden by the hollow tree: it was large enough for them to stand inside. And her father and mother were troubled, for they knew he was a god, not one of our faith, Signorina, but one of the older gods who lived here before the coming of our Lord. One day as he stood there by the tree and was kissing the maiden on her mouth, her father came, very angry, and scolded her, and defied the god, telling him to go away and never show his face there again. And then, he never knew how it happened, for the stranger did not touch him, but he fell stunned to the ground, with a queer flash of light in his eyes. When he woke, the stars were shining over him, and he crawled home. But the maiden was gone, and they never saw her any more, Signorina. Whether it was for good or for ill,

she had been carried away by the god. People think that they disappeared inside the tree, for it closed up that night, and it never opened again. Sometimes they thought they heard voices coming from it, and once or twice, cries and sobs of a woman. Maybe she is imprisoned there and cannot get out: it would be a terrible fate, would it not, Signorina? Me, I think it is better to fight shy of the heathen gods."

Bertuccio's white teeth showed in a broad smile, but no scrutiny on Daphne's part could tell her whether he had told his story for pleasure merely, or for warning. She rode on in silence, realizing, as she had not realized before, how far this peasant stock reached back into the elder days of the ancient world.

"Do you think that your story is true, Bertuccio?" she asked, as they came in sight of the grass-grown mounds of the buried watering-place toward which their steps were bent.

"*Ma che!*" answered Bertuccio, shrugging his shoulders, and snapping his fingers meaningly. "Much is true that one does not see, and one cannot believe all that one does see."

Daphne started. What *had* he seen?

"Besides," added Bertuccio, "there is proof of this. My father's father saw the olive tree, and it was quite closed."

CHAPTER XIII

OVER the shallow tufa basin of the great fountain on the hill Daphne stood gazing into the water. She had sought the deep shadow of the ilex trees, for the afternoon was warm, an almost angry summer heat having followed yesterday's coolness. Her yellow gown gleamed like light against the dull brown of the stone and the dark moss-touched trunks of the trees. Whether she was looking at the tufts of fern and of grass that grew in the wet basin, or whether she was studying her own beauty reflected there, no one could tell, not even Apollo, who had been watching her for some time.

Into his eyes as he looked leaped a light like the flame of the sunshine beyond the shadows on the hill; swiftly he stepped forward and kissed the girl's shoulder where the thin yellow stuff

of her dress showed the outward curve to the arm. She turned and faced him, without a word. There was no need of speech: anger battled with unconfessed joy in her changing face.

"How dare you?" she said presently, when she had won her lips to curves of scorn. "The manners of the gods seem strange to mortals."

"I love you," he answered simply.

Then there was no sound save that of the water, dropping over the edge of the great basin to the soft grass beneath.

"Can't you forgive me?" he asked humbly. "I am profoundly sorry; only, my temptation was superhuman."

"I had thought that you were that, too," said the girl in a whisper.

"There is no excuse, I know; there is only a reason. I love you, little girl. I love your questioning eyes, and your firm mouth, and your smooth brown hair" —

"Stop!" begged Daphne, putting out her hands. "You must not say such things to me, for I am not free to hear them. I must go away," and she turned toward home. But he grasped one of the outstretched hands and drew her to the stone bench near the fountain, and then seated himself near her side.

"Now tell me what you mean," he said quietly.

"I mean," she answered, with her eyes cast down, "that two years ago I promised to love some one else. I must not even hear what you are trying to say to me."

"I think, Miss Willis," he said gently, "that you should have told me this before."

"How could I?" begged the girl. "When could I have done it? Why should I?"

"I do not know," he answered wearily; "only, perhaps it might have spared me some shade of human anguish."

"Human?" asked Daphne, almost smiling.

"No, no, no," he interrupted, not hearing her. "It would not have done any good, for I have loved you from the first minute when I saw your blue drapery flutter in your flight from me. Some deeper sense than mortals have told me that every footstep was falling on my sleeping heart and waking it to life. You were not running away; in some divine sense you were coming toward me. Daphne, Daphne, I cannot let you go!"

The look in the girl's startled eyes was his only answer. By the side of this sun-browned face, in its beauty and its power, rose before her a vision of Eustace Denton, pale, full-lipped, with an ardor for nothingness in his remote blue eyes. How could she have known, in those old days before her revelation came, that faces like this were on the earth: how could she have dreamed that glory of life like this was possible?

In the great strain of the moment they both

grew calm and Daphne told him her story, as much of it as she thought it wise for him to know. Her later sense of misgiving, the breaking of the engagement, the penitence that had led to a renewal of the bonds, she concealed from him; but he learned of the days of study and of quiet work in the shaded corners of her father's library, and of those gayer days and evenings when the figure of the young ascetic had seemed to the girl to have a peculiar saving grace, standing in stern contrast to the social background of her life.

He thanked her, when she had finished, and he watched her, with her background of misty blue distance, sitting where the shadow of the ilexes brought out the color of her scarlet lips and deep gray eyes.

"Daphne," he said presently, "you have told me much about this man, but you have not told me that you love him. You do not speak of him as a woman speaks of the man who

makes her world for her. You defend him, you explain him, you plead his cause, and it must be that you are pleading it with yourself, for I have brought no charge, that you must defend him to me. Do you love him?"

She did not answer.

"Look at me!" he insisted. Her troubled eyes turned toward his, but dared not stay, and the lashes fell again.

"Do not commit the crime of marrying a man you do not love," he pleaded.

"But," said the girl slowly, "even if I gave him up I might not care for you."

"Dear," he said softly, "you do love me. Is it not so?"

She shook her head, but her face belied her.

"I have waited, waited for you," he pleaded, in that low tone to which her being vibrated as to masterful music, "so many lifetimes! I have found you out at last!"

"How long?" she asked willfully.

"Æons," he answered. "Since the foundation of the world. I have waited, and now that I have found you, I will not let you go. I will not let you go!"

She looked at him with wide-opened eyes: a solemn fear possessed her. Was it Bertuccio's story of yesterday that filled her with foreboding? Hardly. Rather it seemed a pleasant thought that he and she should feel the bark of one of these great trees closing round them, and should have so beautiful a screen of brown bark and green moss to hide their love from all the world. No, no fear could touch the thought of any destiny with him: she was afraid only of herself.

"You are putting a mere nothing between us," the voice went on. "You are pretending that there is an obstacle when there is none, really."

"Only another man's happiness," murmured the girl.

"I doubt if he knows what happiness is," said Apollo. "Forgive me, but will he not be as happy with his altar candles and his chants without you? Does he not care more for the abstract cause for which he is working than for you? Has n't he missed the simple meaning of human life, and can anything teach it to him?"

"How did you know?" asked Daphne, startled.

"The gods should divine some things that are not told! Besides, I know the man," he answered, smiling, but Daphne did not hear. She had leaned back and closed her eyes. The warm, sweet air, with its odor of earth, wooed her; the little breeze that made so faint a rustle in the ilex leaves touched her cheek like quick, fluttering kisses. The rhythmical drops from the fountain seemed falling to the music of an old order of things, some simple, elemental way of loving that made harmony through all life. Could love, that had meant only duty, have any-

thing to do with this great joy in mere being, which turned the world to gold?

"I must, I must win you," came the voice again, and it was like a cry. "Loving with more than human love, I will not be denied!"

She opened her eyes and watched him: the whole, firmly-knit frame in the brown golf-suit was quivering.

"It has never turned out well," she said lightly, "when the sons of the gods married with the daughters of men."

Perhaps he would have rebuked her for the jest, but he saw her face.

"I offer you all that man or god can offer," he said, standing before her. "I offer you the devotion of a whole life. Will you take it?"

"I will not break my promise," said the girl, rising. Her eyes were level with his. She found such power in them that she cried out against it in sudden anger.

"Why do you tempt me so? Why do you

come and trouble my mind and take away my peace? Who are you? What are you?"

"If you want a human name for me" — he answered.

She raised her hand swiftly to stop him.

"No, don't!" she said. "I do not want to know. Don't tell me anything, for the mystery is part of the beauty of you."

A shaft of golden sunlight pierced the ilex shade and smote her forehead as she stood there.

"Apollo, the sun god," she said, smiling, as she turned and left him alone.

CHAPTER XIV

Overhead was a sky of soft, dusky blue, broken by the clear light of the stars: all about were the familiar walks of the villa garden, mysterious now in the darkness, and seeming to lead into infinite space. The lines of aloe, fig, and palm stood like shadows guarding a world of mystery. Daphne, wandering alone in the garden at midnight, half exultant, half afraid, stepped noiselessly along the pebbled walks with a feeling that that world was about to open for her. Ahead, through an arch where the thick foliage of the ilexes had been cut to leave the way clear for the passer-by, a single golden planet shone low in the west, and the garden path led to it.

Daphne had been unable to sleep, for sleeplessness had become a habit during the past

week. Whether she was too happy or too unhappy she could not tell: she only knew that she was restless and smothering for air and space. Hastily dressing, she had stolen on tiptoe down the broad stairway by the running water and out into the night, carrying a tiny Greek lamp with a single flame, clear, as only the flame of olive oil can be. She had put the lamp down in the doorway, and it was burning there now, a beacon to guide her footsteps when she wanted to return. Meanwhile, the air was cool on throat and forehead and on her open palms: she had no wish to go in.

Here was a fountain whose jets of water, blown high from the mouths of merry dolphins, fell in spray in a great stone basin where mermaids waited for the shower to touch bare shoulders and bended heads. The murmur of the water, mingled with the murmur of unseen live things, and the melody of night touched the girl's discordant thoughts to music. Of what

avail, after all, was her fierce struggle for duty? Here were soft shadows, and great spaces, and friendly stars.

Of course her lover-god, Apollo, was gone. She had known the other day when she left him on the hill that she would not see him again, for the look of his face had told her that. Of course, it was better so. Now, everything would go on as had been intended. Anna would come home; after this visit was over, there would be New York again, and Eustace. Yes, she was brave to share his duty with him, and the years would not be long. And always these autumn days would be shining through the dark hours of her life, these perfect days of sunshine without shadow. Of their experiences she need not even tell, for she was not sure that it had actually been real. She would keep it as a sacred memory that was half a dream.

She was walking now by the rows of tall

chrysanthemums, and she reached out her fingers to touch them, for she could almost feel their deep yellow through her finger-tips. It was like taking counsel of them, and they, like all nature, were wise. Cypress and acacia and palm stood about like strong comforters; help came from the tangled vines upon the garden wall, from the matted periwinkle on the ground at her feet, and the sweet late roses blossoming in the dark.

Yes, he was gone, and the beauty and the power of him had vanished. It was better so, she kept saying to herself, her thoughts, no matter where they wandered, coming persistently back, as if the idea, so obviously true, needed proving after all. The only thing was, she would have liked to see him just once more to show him how invincible she was. He had taken her by surprise that day upon the hill, and had seen what she had not meant to tell. Now, if she could confront him once, ab-

solutely unshaken, could tell him her decision, give him words of dismissal in a voice that had no tremor in it, as her voice had had the other day, that would be a satisfactory and triumphant parting for one who had come badly off. Her shoulder burned yet where he had kissed it, and yet she was not angry. He must have known that day how little she was vexed. If she could only see him once again, she said wistfully to herself, to show him how angry she was, all would be well.

Daphne had wandered to the great stone gate that led out upon the highway, and was leaning her forehead against a moss-grown post, when she heard a sudden noise. Then the voice of San Pietro Martire broke the stillness of the night, and Daphne, listening, thought she heard a faint sound of bleating. Hermes was calling her, and Hermes was in danger. Up the long avenue she ran toward the house, and, seizing the tiny lamp at the doorway, sped up the slope

toward the inclosure where the two animals grazed, the flame making a trail of light like that of a firefly moving swiftly in the darkness. The bray rang out again, but there was no second sound of bleating. Inside the pasture gate she found the donkey anxiously sniffing at something that lay in the grass. Down on her knees went Daphne, for there lay Hermes stretched out on his side, with traces of blood at his white throat.

The girl put down her lamp and lifted him in her arms. Some cowardly dog had done this thing, and had run away on seeing her, or hearing her unfasten the gate. She put one finger on the woolly bosom, but the heart was not beating. The lamb's awkward legs were stretched out quite stiffly, and his eyes were beginning to glaze. Two tears dropped on the fat white side; then Daphne bent and kissed him. Looking up, she saw San Pietro gazing on with the usual grief of his face intensified.

It was as if he understood that the place at his back where the lamb had cuddled every night must go cold henceforward.

"We must bury him, San Pietro," said Daphne presently. "Come help me find a place."

She put the lambkin gently down upon the ground, and, rising, started, with one arm over San Pietro's neck, to find a burial place for the dead. The donkey followed willingly, for he permitted himself to love his lady with a controlled but genuine affection; and together they searched by the light of the firefly lamp. At last Daphne halted by a diminutive cypress, perhaps two feet high, and announced that she was content.

The tool-house was not far away. Investigating, she found, as she had hoped, that the door was not locked. Arming herself with a hoe she came back, and, under the light of southern stars, dug a little grave in the soft,

dark earth, easily loosened in its crumbling richness. Then she took the lamp and searched in the deep thick grass for flowers, coming back with a mass of pink-tipped daisies gathered in her skirt. The sight of the brown earth set her to [illegible]: there ought to be some kind of shroud. Near the tool-house grew a laurel tree, she remembered, and from that she stripped a handful of green, glossy leaves, to spread upon the bottom of the grave. This done, she bore the body of Hermes to his resting-place, and strewed the corpse with pink daisies.

"Should he have Christian or heathen burial?" she asked, smiling. "This seems to be a place where the two faiths meet. I think neither. He must just be given back to Mother Nature."

She heaped the sod over him with her own hands, and fitted neatly together some bits of turf. Then she took up her lamp to go. San

Pietro, tired of ceremony, was grazing in the little circle of light.

"To-morrow," said Daphne, as she went down the hill, "he will be eating grass from Hermes' grave."

CHAPTER XV

THE shadow of branching palms fell on the Signorina's hair and hands as she sat at work near the fountain in the garden weaving a great wreath of wild cyclamen and of fern gathered from the hillside. Assunta was watching her anxiously, her hands resting on her hips.

"It 's a poor thing to offer the Madonna," she said at length, "just common things that grow."

Daphne only smiled at her and went on winding white cord about the stems under green fronds where it could not be seen.

"I was ready to buy a wreath of beautiful gauze flowers from Rome," ventured Assunta, "all colors, red and yellow and purple. I have plenty of silver for it upstairs in a silk bag. Our Lady will think I am not thankful, though

the blessed saints know I have never been so thankful in my life as I am for Bertuccio's coming home when he did."

"The Madonna will know," said Daphne. "She will like this better than anything else."

"Are you sure?" asked Assunta dubiously.

"Yes," asserted the girl, laughing. "She told me so!"

The audacity of the remark had an unexpected effect on the peasant woman. Assunta crossed herself.

"Perhaps she did! Perhaps she did! And do you think she does not mind my waiting?"

"No," answered Daphne gravely. "She knows that you have been very busy taking care of me."

Assunta trotted away, apparently content, to consult Giacomo about dinner. The girl went on weaving with busy fingers, the shadow of her lashes on her cheek. As she worked her thoughts wove for her the one picture that they

made always for her now: Apollo standing on the hillside under the ilexes with the single ray of sunshine touching his face. All the rest of her life kept fading, leaving the minutes of that afternoon alone distinct. And it was ten days ago!

Presently Giacomo came hurrying down the path toward her, dangling his white apron by its string as he ran.

"Signorina!" he called breathlessly. "Would the Signorina, when she has finished that, graciously make another wreath?"

"Certainly. For you?"

"Not for me," he answered mysteriously, drawing nearer. "Not for me, but for Antoli, the shepherd who herds the flock of Count Gianelli. He has seen from the window the Signorina making a wreath for our Lady, and he too wants to present her with a thank-offering for the miracle she wrought for him. But will the Signorina permit him to come and tell her?"

Even while Giacomo was speaking Daphne saw the man slowly approaching, urged on apparently by encouraging gestures from Assunta, who was standing at the corner of the house. A thrill went through the girl's nerves as she saw the rough brown head of the peasant rising above the sheepskin coat that the shepherd-god had worn. Unless miracle had made another like it, it was the very same, even to the peculiar jagged edge where it met in front.

Antoli's expression was foolish and ashamed, but at Giacomo's bidding he began a recital of his recent experiences. The girl strained her ears to listen, but hardly a word of this dialect of the Roman hills was intelligible to her. The gesture wherewith the shepherd crossed himself, and his devout pointing to the sky were all she really understood.

Then Giacomo translated.

"Because he was ill — but the Signorina

knows the story — the blessed Saint Sebastian came down to him and guarded the sheep, and he went home and became well, miraculously well. See how he is recovered from his fever! It was our Lady who wrought it all. Now he comes back and all his flock is there: not one is missing, but all are fat and flourishing. Does not the Signorina believe that it was some one from another world who helped him?"

"*Si*," answered Daphne, looking at the sheepskin coat.

"No one has seen the holy saint except himself, but the blessed one has appeared again to him. Antoli came back, afraid that the sheep were scattered, afraid of being dismissed. He found his little tent in order; food was there, and better food than shepherds have, eggs and wine and bread. While he waited the blessed one himself came, with light shining about his hair. He brought back the coat that he had worn: see, is it not proof that he was there?"

"The coat was a new one," interrupted the shepherd.

Giacomo repeated, and went on.

"He smiled and talked most kindly, and when he went away — the Signorina understands?"

Daphne nodded.

"He gave his hand to Antoli," said Giacomo breathlessly.

"I will make the wreath," said the Signorina, smiling. "It shall be of these," and she held up a handful of pink daisies, mingled with bits of fern and ivy leaves. "Assunta shall take it to the church when she takes hers. I rejoice that you are well," she added, turning to Antoli with a polite sentence from the phrase-book.

As she worked on after they were gone, Assunta came to her again.

"The Signorina heard?" she asked.

"*Si*. Is the story true?" asked Daphne.

Assunta's eyes were full of hidden meaning.

"The Signorina ought to know."

"Why?"

"Has not the Signorina seen the blessed one herself?" she asked.

"I?" said Daphne, starting.

"The night the lambkin was killed, did not the Signorina go out in great distress, and did not the blessed one come to her aid?"

"*Ma che!*" exclaimed Daphne faintly, falling back, in her astonishment, upon Assunta's vocabulary.

"I have told no one, not even Giacomo," said Assunta, "but I saw it all. The noise had wakened me, and I followed, but I stopped when I saw that the divine one was there. Only I watched from the clump of cypress trees."

"Where was he?" asked Daphne with unsteady voice.

"Beyond the laurel trees," said Assunta. "Did not the Signorina see?"

The girl shook her head.

"How did you know that he was one of the divine?" she asked.

"Can I not tell the difference between mortal man and one of them?" cried the peasant woman scornfully. "It was the shining of his face, and the light about his hair, Signorina. Every look and every motion showed that he was not of this world. Besides, how could I see him in the dark if he were not the blessed Saint Sebastian? And who sent the dog away if it was not he?" she added triumphantly.

"But why should he appear to me?" asked Daphne. "I have no claim upon the help of the saints."

"Perhaps because the Signorina is a heretic," answered Assunta tenderly. "Our Lady must have special care for her if she sends out the holy ones to bring her to the fold."

The woman's face was alight with reverence and pride, and Daphne turned back to her

flowers, shamed by these peasant folk for their belief in the immanence of the divine.

Half an hour later Assunta reappeared, clad in Sunday garments, wearing her best coral earrings and her little black silk shoulder shawl covered with gay embroidered flowers. She held out a letter to the girl.

"I go to take the wreaths to Our Lady," she announced, "and to confess and pray. The Signorina has made them pretty, if they are but common things."

Daphne was reading her letter; even the peasant woman could see that it bore glad tidings, for the light that broke in the girl's face was like the coming of dawn over the hills.

"Wait, Assunta," she said quietly, when she had finished, and she disappeared among the trees. In a minute she came back with three crimson roses, single, and yellow at the heart.

"Will you take them with your wreaths for me to the Madonna?" she said, putting them into Assunta's hand. "I am more thankful than either one of you."

CHAPTER XVI

ASSUNTA had carried a small tray out to the arbor in the garden, and Daphne was having her afternoon tea there alone. About her, on the frescoed walls of this little open-air pavilion, were grouped pink shepherds and shepherdesses, disporting themselves in airy garments of blue and green in a meadow that ended abruptly to make room for long windows. The girl leaned back and sipped her tea luxuriously. She was clad in a gown that any shepherdess among them might have envied, a pale yellow crêpy thing shot through with gleams of gold. Before her the Countess Accolanti's silver service was set out on an inlaid Florentine table, partially protected by an open work oriental scarf. Upon it lay the letter that had come an hour before, and the Signorina now and then feasted

her eyes upon it. Just outside the door was a bust of Masaccio, set on a tall pedestal, grass growing on the rough hair and heavy eyelids. Pavilion and tea-table seemed an odd bit of convention, set down in the neglected wildness of this old garden, and Daphne watched it all with entire satisfaction over her Sèvres teacup.

Presently she was startled by seeing Assunta come hurrying back with a teacup and saucer in one hand, a hot water jug in the other. The rapid Italian of excited moments Daphne never pretended to understand, consequently she gathered from Assunta's incoherent words neither names nor impressions, only the bare fact that a caller for the Countess Accolanti had rung the bell.

"He inquired, too, for the Signorina," remarked the peasant woman finally, when her breath had nearly given out.

"Do you know him?" asked Daphne. "Have you seen him before?"

"But yes, thousands of times," said Assunta in a stage whisper. "See, he comes. I thought it best to say that he would find the Signorina in the garden. And the Signorina must pardon me for the card: I dropped it into the tea-kettle and it is wet, quite wet."

Assunta had time to note with astonishment before she left that hostess and caller met as old friends, for the Signorina held out her hand in greeting before a word of introduction had been said.

"I am told that your shepherd life is ended," remarked Daphne, as she filled the cup just brought. Neither her surprise nor her joy in his coming showed in her face.

"For the present, yes."

"You have won great devotion," said Daphne, smiling. "Only, they all mistake you for a Christian saint."

"What does it matter?" said Apollo. "The feeling is the same."

"Assunta knew you at once as one of those in her calendar," the girl went on, "but she seems to recognize your supernatural qualities only by lamplight. I am a little bit proud that I can detect them by day as well."

Her gayety met no response from him, and there was a long pause. To the girl it seemed that the enveloping sunshine of the garden was only a visible symbol of her new divine content. If she had looked closely, which she dared not do, she would have seen that the lurking sadness in the man's face had leaped to the surface, touching the brown eyes with a look of eternal grief.

"I ventured to stop," he said presently, "because I was not sure that happy chance would throw us together again. I have come to say good-by."

"You are going away?"

"I am going away," he answered slowly.

"So shall I, some day," said Daphne, "and

then moss will grow green on my seat by the fountain, and San Pietro will be sold to some peddler who will beat him. Of course it had to end! Sometimes, when you tread the blue heights of Olympus, will you think of me walking on the hard pavements of New York?"

"I shall think of you, yes," he said, failing to catch her merriment.

"And if you ever want a message from me," she continued, "you must look for it on your sacred laurel there on the hill by Hermes' grave. It is just possible, you know, that I shall be inside, and if I am, I shall speak to you through my leaves, when you wander that way."

Something in the man's face warned her, and her voice became grave.

"Why do you go?" she asked.

"It is the only thing to do," he answered. "Life has thrown me back into the old position, and I must face the same foes again. I always rush too eagerly to snatch my good; I

always hit my head against some impassable wall. I thought I had won my battles and was safe, and then you came."

The life had gone out of his voice, the light from his face. Looking at him Daphne saw above his temples a touch of gray in the golden brown of his hair.

"And then?" she asked softly.

"Then my hard-won control vanished, and I felt that I could stake my hopes of heaven and my fears of hell to win you."

"A Greek god, with thoughts of hell?" murmured Daphne.

"Hell," he answered, "is a feeling, not a place, as has often been observed. I happen to be in it now, but it does not matter. Yes, I am going away, Daphne, Daphne. You say that there are claims upon you that you cannot thrust aside. I shall go, but in some life, some time, I shall find you again."

Daphne looked at him with soft triumph in

her eyes. Secure in the possession of that letter on the table, she would not tell him yet! This note of struggle gave deeper melody to the joyous music of the shepherd on the hills.

"I asked you once about your life and all that had happened to you: do you remember?" he inquired. "I have never told you of my own. Will you let me tell you now?"

"If you do not tell too much and explain yourself away," she answered.

"It is a story of tragedy, and of folly, recognized too late. I have never told it to any human being, but I should like you to understand. It has been an easy life, so far as outer circumstances go. Until I was eighteen I was lord and dictator in a household of women, spoiled by mother and sisters alike. Then came the grief of my life. Oh, I cannot tell it, even to you!"

The veins stood out on his forehead, and his

face was indeed like the face of a tortured Saint Sebastian. The girl's eyes were sweet with sympathy, and with something else that he did not look to see.

"There was a plan made for a journey. I opposed it for some selfish whim, for I had a scheme of my own. They yielded to me as they always did, and took my way. That day there was a terrible accident, and all who were dear to me were killed, while I, the murderer, was cursed with life. So, when I was eighteen, my world was made up of four graves in the cemetery at Rome, and of that memory. Whatever the world may say, I was as guilty of those deaths as if I had caused them by my own hand."

He had covered his face with his palms, and his head was bent. The girl reached out as if to touch the rumpled brown hair with consoling fingers, then drew her hand back. In a moment, when her courage came, he should

know what share of comfort she was ready to give him. Meanwhile, she hungered to make the farthest reach of his suffering her own.

"Since then?" she asked softly.

"Since then I have been trying to build my life up out of its ruins. I have tried to win content and even gladness, for I hold that man should be master of himself, even of remorse for his old sins. You see, I 've been busy trying to find out people who had the same kind of misery, or some other kind, to face."

"Shepherd of the wretched," said the girl dreamily.

"Something like that," he answered.

The girl's face was all a-quiver for pity of the tale; in listening to the story of his life she had completely forgotten her own. Then, before she knew what was happening, he rose abruptly and held out his hand.

"Every minute that I stay makes matters harder," he said. "I 've got to go to see if I

cannot win gladness even out of this, for still my gospel is the gospel of joy. Good-by."

Suddenly Daphne realized that he was gone! She could hear his footsteps on the pebble-stones of the walk as he swung on with his long stride. She started to run after him, then stopped. After all, how could she find words for what she had to say? Walking to the great gate by the highway she looked wistfully between its iron rods, for one last glimpse of him. A sudden realization came to her that she knew nothing about him, not even an address, "except Delphi," she said whimsically to herself. Only a minute ago he had been there; and now she had wantonly let him go out of her life forever.

"I wonder if the Madonna threw my roses away," she thought, coming back with slow feet to the arbor, and realizing for the first time since she had reached the Villa Accolanti that she was alone, and very far away from home.

CHAPTER XVII

San Pietro and Bertuccio were waiting at the doorway, both blinking sleepily in the morning air. At San Pietro's right side hung a tiny pannier, covered by a fringed white napkin, above which lay a small flask decorated with corn husk and gay yarn, where red wine sparkled like rubies in the sunshine. The varying degrees of the donkey's resignation were registered exactly in the changing angles at which his right ear was cocked.

"*Pronta!*" called Assunta, who was putting the finishing touches on saddle and luncheon basket. "If the Signorina means to climb the Monte Altiera she must start before the sun is high."

On the hillside above Daphne heard, but her feet strayed only more slowly. She was wander-

ing, with a face like that of a sky across which thin clouds scud, in the grass about Hermes' grave. In her hand was the letter of yesterday, and in her eyes the memory of the days before.

"It is all too late," said Daphne, who had learned to talk aloud in this world where no one understood. "The Greeks were right in thinking that our lives are ruled by mocking fate. I wonder what angry goddess cast forgetfulness upon my mind, so that I forgot to tell Apollo what this letter says."

Daphne looked to the open sky, but it gave no answer, and she paused by the laurel tree with head bent down. Then, with a sudden, wistful little laugh, she held out the letter and fastened it to the laurel, tearing a hole in one corner to let a small bare twig go through. With a blunt pencil she scribbled on it in large letters: "Let Apollo read, if he ever wanders this way."

"He will never find it," said the girl, "and the rain will come and soak it, and it will bleach

in the sun. But nobody else knows enough to read it, and I shall leave it there on his sacred tree, as my last offering. I suppose there is some saving grace even in the sacrifices that go astray."

Then she descended the hill, climbed upon San Pietro's back, and rode through the gateway.

An hour later, Assunta, going to find a spade in the tool-house, for she was transplanting roses, came upon the Signorina's caller of yesterday standing near the tool-house with something in his hand. The peasant woman's face showed neither awe nor fear; only lively curiosity gleamed in the blinking brown eyes.

"Buon' giorno," said Apollo, exactly as mortals do.

"Buon' giorno, Altezza," returned Assunta.

"Is the Signorina at home?" asked the intruder.

"But no!" cried Assunta. "She has started

to climb the very sky to-day, Monte Altiera, and for what I can't make out. It only wears out Bertuccio's shoes and the *asinetto's* legs."

"Grazia," said Apollo, moving away.

"Does his Highness think that the Signorina resembles her sister, the Contessa?" asked the peasant woman for the sake of a detaining word.

"Not at all," answered the visitor, and he passed into the open road.

Then he turned over in his hand the letter which he had taken from the laurel. Though he had read it three times he hardly understood as yet, and his face was the face of one who sees that the incredible has come to pass. The letter was made up of fifteen closely written pages, and it told the story of a young clergyman, who, convinced at last that celibacy and the shelter of the Roman priesthood were his true vocation, had, after long prayer and much meditation, decided to flee the snares of the

world and to renounce its joys for the sake of bliss the other side of life.

"When you receive this letter, my dear Daphne," wrote Eustace Denton, "I shall have been taken into the brotherhood of Saint Ambrose, for I wish to place myself in a position where there will be no retracing my steps."

The face of the reader on the Roman hills, as it was lifted from the page again to the sunshine, was full of the needless pity of an alien faith.

Along the white road that led up the mountain, and over the grass-grown path that climbed the higher slopes, trod a solitary traveler. Now his step was swift, as if some invisible spirit of the wind were wafting him on; and again the pace was slow and his head bent, as if some deep thought stayed his speed. There were green slopes above, green slopes below, and the world opened out as he climbed on and up. Out and out stretched the great Campagna,

growing wider at each step, with the gray, unbroken lines of aqueduct leading toward Rome and the shining sea beyond.

. . . . . .

On a great flat stone far up on the heights sat two motionless figures: below them, partly veiling the lower world, floated a thin mist of cloud.

"This must be Olympus," said Daphne.

"Any mountain is Olympus that touches the sky," answered Apollo.

"Where are the others?" demanded the girl. "Am I not to know your divine friends?"

"Don't you see them?" he asked as in surprise, — "Aphrodite just yonder in violet robe, and Juno, and Hermes with winged feet" —

"I am afraid I am a wee bit blind, being but mortal," answered Daphne. "I can see nothing but you."

Beside them on the rock, spread out on oak leaves, lay clusters of purple grapes, six black

ripe olives, and a little pile of *biscotti Inglesi*. The girl bent and poured from the curving flask red wine that bubbled in the glass, then gave it to her companion, saying: "Quick, before Hebe gets here," and the sound of their merriment rung down the hillside.

"Hark!" whispered Daphne. "I hear an echo of the unquenchable laughter of the gods! They cannot be far away."

From another stone near at hand Bertuccio watched them with eyes that feigned not to see. Bertuccio did not understand English, but he understood everything else. Goodly shares of the nectar and ambrosia of this feast had fallen to his lot, and Bertuccio in his own way was almost as happy as the lovers. In the soft grass near San Pietro Martire nibbled peacefully, now and then lifting his eyes to see what was going on. Once he brayed. He alone, of all nature, seemed impervious to the joy that had descended upon earth.

It was only an hour since Daphne had been overtaken. Few words had sufficed for understanding, and Bertuccio had looked away.

"My only fear was that I should find you turned into a laurel tree," said Apollo. "I shall always be afraid of that."

"Apollo," said Daphne irrelevantly, holding out to him a bunch of purple grapes in the palm of her hand, "there is a practical side to all this. People will have to know, I am afraid. I must write to my sister."

"I have reason to think that the Countess Accolanti will not be displeased," he answered. There was a queer little look about his mouth, but Daphne asked for no explanation.

"There is your father," he suggested.

"Oh!" said Daphne. "He will love you at once. His tastes and mine are very much alike."

The lover-god smiled, quite satisfied.

"You chose the steepest road of all to-day,

little girl," he said. "But it is not half so long nor so hard as the one I expected to climb to find you."

"You are tired!" said Daphne anxiously. "Rest."

Bertuccio was sleeping on his flat rock; San Pietro lay down for a brief, ascetic slumber. The lovers sat side by side, with the mystery of beauty about them: the purple and gold of nearness and distance; bright color of green grass near, sombre tint of cypress and stone pine afar.

"I shall never really know whether you are a god or not," said Daphne dreamily.

"A very proper attitude for a woman to have toward her husband," he answered with a smile. "I must try hard to live up to the character. You will want to live on Olympus, and you really ought, if you are going to wear gowns woven of my sunbeams like the one you had on yesterday. How shall I convince you

that Rome must do part of the time? You will want me to make you immortal: that always happens when a maiden marries a god."

"I think you have done that already," said Daphne.

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